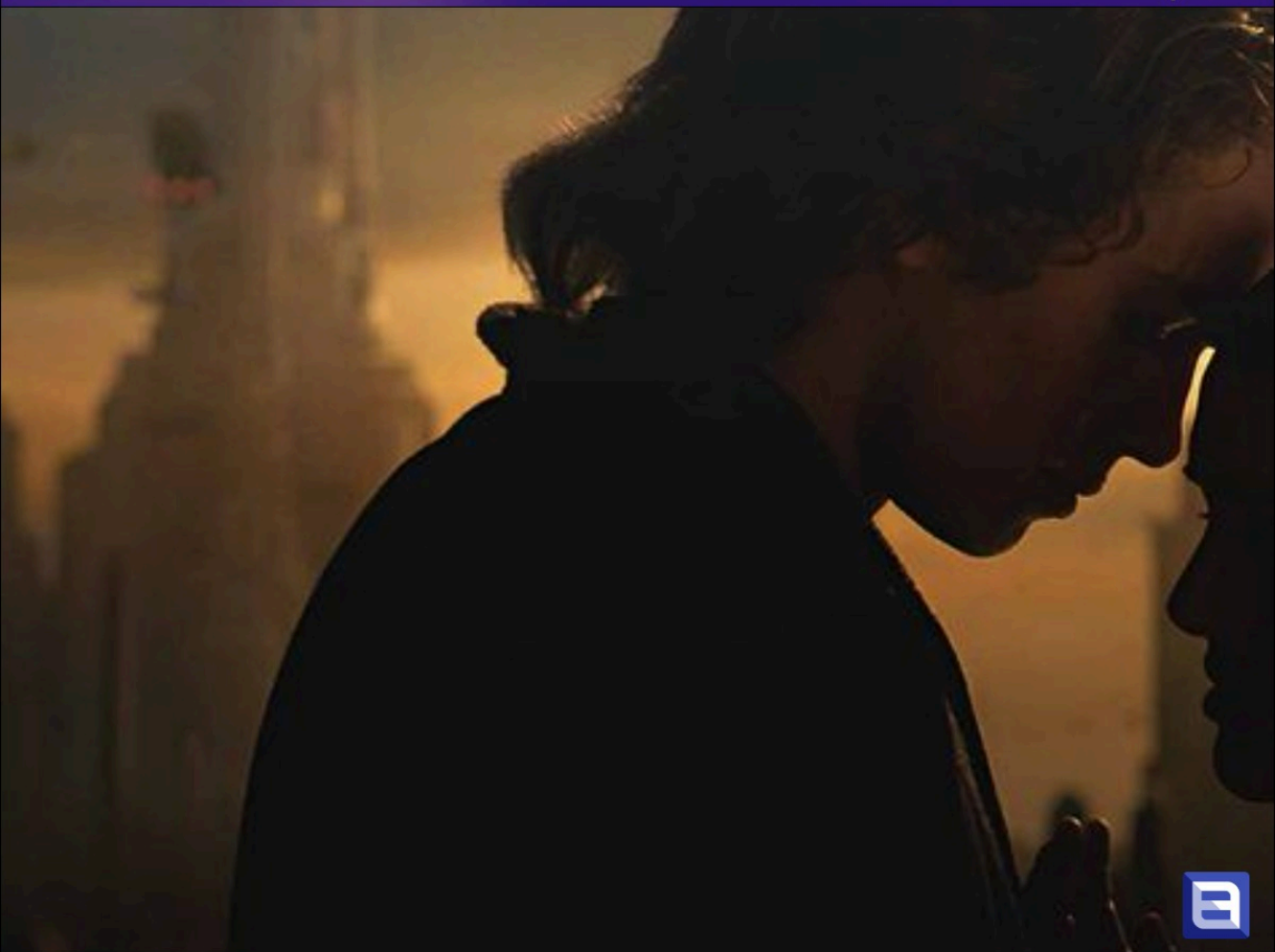


The Emperor's Gift, The Emperor's Curse

jmsbndgrl

Star Wars

Complete



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Summary

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Description:

AU Former Senator Padme Amidala has been thrown out of her office when Palpatine declared himself Emperor. She is now his prisoner. Vader in this fic is without his suit and has never met Padme before.

Ch 1: Interrogation

The Emperor's Gift, The Emperor's Curse

Summary: Former Senator Padmé Amidala has been thrown out of her office, when Palpatine declared himself Emperor. She has been his prisoner for several months, until he decides to dispose of her. Note: Vader in this fic is without his suit, and he has never met Padmé before.

Chapter 1: Interrogation

Detention Area AA-93, Cell 2443

Two Imperial guards, held a battered and bruised prisoner in their arms, as another guard interrogated her.

“Which senators are members of the Rebel Alliance? Name your accomplices.” The guard barked at her.

The woman did not answer. In retaliation, the guard flicked a whip at her, adding another welt to her body.

“Answer me!” The guard yelled.

The woman remained silent. She stared up at her tormentor, and did not flinch when the whip struck her again. She would not talk, and they could not make her. She was former Senator Padmé Amidala of the Naboo, and she would not yield to the Empire. She served the Republic, and would not betray her friends and colleagues that were working to bring democracy back to the galaxy. As she gazed up at her interrogator, Padmé remembered a fateful day from the past.

Six months ago, Supreme Chancellor Palpatine had showed up in the main Senate chamber in a horrible state. His face looked like it had aged over 50 years from the previous day. He claimed that the Jedi had attempted to kill him. He declared war on the Jedi and those who helped protect them. Padmé remembered feeling sorry for Palpatine, and betrayal at the Jedi who were obviously trying to undermine the Republic.

However, her pity was short lived, because in the next breath the Supreme Chancellor dissolved the Republic and created the Empire. As he declared himself Emperor, Padmé realized that the Chancellor was evil and power hungry. She realized that the Jedi had not betrayed democracy; they must have tried to prevent the change in government. Padmé's eyes narrowed as she continued to listen to the “Emperor's” speech.

After the Senate meeting was adjourned, Padmé met up with several other Senators to discuss the day's events. All the Senators that Padmé spoke with were shocked and dismayed

with the fall of democracy. They all knew that they needed to act quickly and silently in order to reverse these events.

Padmé and the senators from Alderaan, Corellia, Mon Calamari, and Chandrila, formed the Rebel Alliance. Using their political influence, they recruited members, protected the Jedi who survived the Emperor's purge, and created a resistance movement to fight the Empire. Through their efforts, they hoped to bring down Imperial rule and restore the Republic to its former glory.

Unfortunately, not every member they recruited was friendly. The Empire had hired a network of spies to infiltrate the Alliance and track down its leaders. Padmé was imprisoned after one such spy revealed her to the Empire.

Padmé was charged with treason, and was interrogated almost daily as to the whereabouts of her rebel friends. Everyday, she refused to answer. After her arrest, the other members of the Rebel Alliance became more cautious with whom they dealt and spoke to, and were much more secretive. Padmé knew that they longed to help rescue their friend, but it would risk the continuance of the rebellion and any hope to restore democracy. They knew that Padmé would say that restoring Democracy was of most importance, and she was happy that her friends had not tried to risk everything on her account.

The whip slashed across Padmé again as she failed to answer again.

"Tell us where your rebel friends are!" The interrogator yelled for the fourth time.

The interrogator raised his whip again, but was stopped from flailing it at his prisoner when a dark, oily voice sounded behind him.

"You may desist in this pointless exercise Captain. You are only breaking her body, not her spirit."

The interrogator dropped his whip as he turned around. Startled, he quickly bowed to the Emperor who stood in the doorway.

"As you wish my lord," the interrogator intoned as he rose from his bow.

"You have done well Captain, you may leave."

"Thank you my lord." The interrogator replied. He quickly picked up his dropped whip and exited the cell.

After he left, the Emperor turned his attention to the floor before him. The two guards who had been holding Padmé while she was whipped had pushed her down to kneel before him.

"Leave us." The Emperor ordered the guards, who quickly exited the cell. Using the Force, the Emperor closed the door behind them.

The Emperor looked down at the woman kneeling before him, who defiantly locked her gaze onto his. Remaining silent, he slowly paced in front of her.

After pacing five times, he turned back to the woman and broke the silence, "So... Senator Amidala, I see that three months as my prisoner has not broken you yet. You still defy me."

Outwardly, Padmé remained stoically still. Inwardly, she recoiled, the man before her made her skin crawl. She would have stood to continue her defiance, but her battered body was too weak to support her. Instead, she sat up as straight as she could and remained silent as he continued to speak.

“Stubborn as ever.” The Emperor softly cackled. “Why don’t you speak to me, old friend?”

“You are not my friend.” Padmé replied.

The Emperor smiled at the comment as he replied, “Come now my lady, do not fool yourself. You are my friend. After all, it is you who raised me from a lowly senator to Supreme Chancellor. If you had that much confidence in me, we must have been friends.”

He was trying to goad her, and Padmé knew it. She had called for a vote of no confidence in Chancellor Valorum’s leadership thirteen years ago, when he failed to act promptly to an invasion by the Trade Federation on her home planet of Naboo. Senator Palpatine was promoted to take his place. She felt guilty with the thought that her actions had helped the monster before her come closer to the power he lusted after.

“Palpatine was never my friend. He was just a facade to facilitate a man’s greed.” She replied as she stared stonily up at him.

“Milady, that hurts me deeply.” Palpatine answered as he mockingly faked a look of pain. “You should not say such unkind things, to your dear friend, Emperor Palpatine.” He stated with a smile.

“You are not Palpatine. That was all a cover-up. I know who you are. You are Darth Sidious, Dark Lord of the Sith, enemy to the Jedi Knights, enemy to the Republic, and most importantly, enemy to me!” Padmé replied angrily.

Sidious smiled. “You are as wise as you are stubborn, milady.” He paused for a moment, and then continued. “You have shown great strength these past three months as my prisoner, a strength that would be valuable to the Empire. We could end the conflict between the rebellion and the Empire today if you will listen to what I have come to offer you.”

“And what is that?” Padmé spit out in contempt.

“Marry me. Become my Empress. Rule the galaxy with me. With you by my side, we can unite the galaxy together to bring peace to the Empire. You want peace, don’t you?”

Padmé felt nauseous from Sidious’s proposal. She would never marry the evil, foul creature before her. “Not at the price of democracy.” She replied.

Sidious smiled at Padmé’s discomfort. He knew that she would refuse him. He did not want to marry this insufferable woman, but he enjoyed watching her squirm. He decided to press her some more before taking his leave. “And what if I offered democracy as well.”

Padmé glared at him. “You lie! I will never marry you. I would rather die.”

“So be it.” Sidious replied, and he walked out of the cell, locking it behind him.

Ch 2: Imperial Dilemma

Chapter 2: Imperial Dilemma

Sidious smiled as he left Senator Amidala's cell. He could feel her anger and hatred for him, and he basked in it. The dark side sang through his veins as he replayed the conversation with her in his mind. He had enjoyed messing with the Senator, but he was also tired of her stubbornness. He knew that she would never break and tell him the information about the rebellion. He longed to kill her and be rid of her, but he knew he could not do that. Amidala was well liked by many, even if she was accused of treason. Killing her, might influence more people to join the strengthening rebellion. Additionally, he did not want to create a martyr that may help unite the rebellion further.

No, Senator Amidala had to be kept alive, even if it grated at Sidious's nerves. He would not allow her death to topple his Empire. Furthermore, he needed to further discredit her in the eyes of his subjects, so that she would not pose a threat to him in life. He would have to meditate on this today.

Entering his office, Sidious reviewed his messages on the holo. All that was there were six messages from various dignitaries who were trying to schmooze him. Sidious smirked at the thought that these idiots thought that they could garner influence by paying favors to the Emperor. These fools obviously did not know who they were dealing with.

After deleting the holos, Sidious set to the task of reviewing the reports on Imperial fleet movements in the Outer Rim. He was pleased to read that things were quiet and that the various systems were being compliant as they fell to Imperial rule. Everyday, Imperial forces were bringing another world under their jurisdiction, and Sidious loved to watch his power grow.

After finishing with the reports, Sidious signed a few requisitions for more clone troops in Kamino to deal with the meddlesome rebellion. Then searched for the report from his apprentice on his efforts in tracking the rebels. However, the report was not on his desk. Curious as to the tardiness of this report, Sidious pushed a buzzer, to get the attention on one of his aides.

A minute later, a young lieutenant cautiously entered the Emperor's office, bowed, and stated, "How may I be of service my Lord?"

"Has a report arrived from Lord Vader today?"

"No my lord. All the reports we have received were placed on your desk this morning, and we have received no other transmissions."

"Curious." Sidious paused and then continued. "Very well Lieutenant, you may leave. But if you do hear from Lord Vader, let me know immediately."

“As you wish, my Lord.” The lieutenant replied with a bow, and then quickly exited the office.

Sidious was curious as to why Lord Vader had failed to report this morning. He had better have a good reason, when he finally did report or he would face his master’s fury. In the meantime, Sidious’s office tasks were completed for the day, and he would spend the rest of his time meditating. Hopefully, he would find a solution to his problem with Senator Amidala.

Two hours later, Sidious’s meditations were interrupted by a buzz from his comm. unit.

“Yes.” Sidious replied as he pressed a button to receive the message.

“My Lord, we are receiving an urgent holo message from Lord Vader.” The lieutenant from the morning responded.

“Patch it through.”

“Yes my Lord.” The lieutenant replied, as he relayed Vader’s message to Sidious’s office.

Sidious turned to his holo projector, and saw an image of Lord Vader kneeling in deference to his master.

“Rise, my friend.” Sidious said to the image.

Lord Vader’s image rose, and he replied. “I have come to give my report on the Rebel’s my lord.”

“Your report should have been in this morning, I hope you have a good reason for your tardiness.”

“Yes my lord. I am currently in orbit around Yavin 4. I have tracked a small band of rebels. I captured two of them early this morning, and have been interrogating them. Based on the information they provided, none of the rebel leaders are stationed with them. However, it appears that this base is a staging area for some of their operations against the Empire. I am now awaiting your orders, on what should be done with these rebels.”

Palpatine stayed silent for a moment. He was pleased that his apprentice had found some rebels, but annoyed that none of the leaders were with them. An example would need to be made out of these few. It may weaken the rebellion by making its followers reluctant to serve. “Wipe them out, all of them.”

“Yes, my master.” Vader bowed.

Suddenly, Sidious had an idea for his problem with Senator Amidala. Before the transmission could cut out he added, “You have done well, Lord Vader. When you are finished dispatching with the rebels, you will return to Coruscant. A celebration will be held in honor of your victory.”

“Thank you, my master.” Vader replied with a bow as the transmission ended.

Sidious smiled when the transmission ended. Indeed his apprentice had done well. Not only would the rebellion be dealt a blow, but he also had the opportunity to discredit Senator Amidala.

Sidious got out of his chair and walked to a window to look at the Coruscant skyline. As his gaze lingered a smile crept on his face again and he whispered, "Hurry home my apprentice. You have given me a great gift, and now I have one for you."

Ch 3: The Emperor's Gift

Chapter 3: The Emperor's Gift

Sidious walked back to his desk and pressed the buzzer to call his aide to him. A few minutes later, the lieutenant from the morning quickly strode inside and once again bowed to the Emperor.

“My Lord, is there something else I can do for you?”

“Yes.” Sidious paused and then continued. “Send a healer down to detention block AA-93 and have them tend to Senator Amidala’s injuries.”

“It shall be done my lord.”

“Cancel all of her future interrogations. I want her in perfect health before the end of the week, see to it personally, that this is arranged.”

The lieutenant cringed slightly at his new responsibility, “Yes my lord. Is there anything else you require?”

“Yes. We will hold a celebration in honor of Lord Vader’s victory against the rebels in one week. Please make all arrangements for the party. We will hold it in the reception hall of the Senate building. Make sure you invite all nobility, senators, governors, and high-ranking military personnel. Additionally, make sure that representatives from every media outlet are present.”

The lieutenant was shocked by the last request. The media was usually banned from attending Imperial events. The Emperor liked to keep his functions private. However, he was not going to question this change in protocol. “It shall be done my lord.”

“Very good lieutenant, you may leave.”

With that, the lieutenant bowed and left the Emperor’s office for the second time. Once the door closed, the Emperor smiled again, everything was going according to plan.

Vader returned to Coruscant, one week after his holo transmission with his master. Leaving his Super Star Destroyer, The Executor, in orbit, he took a shuttle to the planet’s surface. Vader landed his shuttle on his personal landing platform, where a military contingent and the Emperor himself waited to greet him.

When Vader stepped out of his shuttle, he slowly walked down the exit ramp, his black cloak billowing in the wind. At the bottom of the ramp, Vader knelt before his waiting master.

“Welcome home, Lord Vader. You have done well.” Sidious said with a smile.

Vader did not answer, but continued to kneel before his master.

“Rise and walk with me my friend. We must not keep your guests waiting. Everyone has turned out for the celebration party in honor of your victory. This will be a memorable night, so lets hasten to the Senate building to start the festivities.” Sidious added.

Vader stood and said. “Yes, my master. Thank you.” Then he started walking. He stood on the right hand side of his master. Both their paces matched each other’s perfectly. As they walked towards the nearby Senate building, Sidious continued to talk.

“I am pleased with your actions, my apprentice. You have hurt the rebel alliance, and helped strengthen the Empire. In commemoration of your efforts, I will bestow a gift to you at tonight’s party.”

Vader was surprised at this announcement. His master rarely gave gifts to anyone. The last gift Vader had received from his master was his Super Star Destroyer after he successfully led the Emperor’s purge of the Jedi Knights. Vader was curious to see what he would receive tonight. “I am honored, my master.”

They remained in silence as they continued their walk to the Senate building, and the night’s festivities. When they arrived at the entrance, they paused as heralds inside announced their arrival. They could overhear one herald on the other side of the closed doors call out to the assembled guests, “Ladies and Gentleman. It is my great pleasure to announce the arrival of Emperor Palpatine and his special guest for this evening, High Commander of the Imperial Forces, Darth Vader.

The doors were thrown open and both the Emperor and Vader entered the Senate building to loud applause and cheers. Vader was surprised when a number of reporters started taking pictures of his master and him. Usually, his master did not allow the media anywhere near him. However, he suspected that his master wanted a high media presence to highlight the victory against the rebels, so he did not question it.

After their initial greeting, the Emperor and Vader separated to mingle with their guests. Various dignitaries, all trying to gain his favor, immediately surrounded the Emperor. Vader on the other hand, was surrounded by a giggling group of courtesans. These women all longed to be Vader’s wife. Vader knew this, and it irritated him. These women only wanted him because he was powerful and second in command behind the Emperor himself. The only reason why they fawned over him instead of his master was because he was much easier on the eyes, he suspected.

As Vader listened to the mind numbing dribble of these women for three hours, he was glad a Sith was not allowed to love. These women were useless, and he was glad he would not have to be forced to live with one of these idiots for an extended period of time. Vader longed for the evening to end so that he could start enjoying his week’s worth of R&R in solitude before he was back on the Executor, hunting down rebels.

Two hours past before the Emperor got up to make his closing speech that would adjourn the party. Vader was relieved to see his master take the podium. The room grew quiet as everyone waited for the Emperor to start his speech.

“Honored guests, I am pleased you could all make it to this celebration tonight.” Sidious paused and smiled to the crowd. “We are here to celebrate a great triumph for the Empire. Lord Vader has destroyed an outpost of the traitorous rebellion. Through his efforts, he has

helped secure our way of life, and brought us one step closer to ending the conflict and restore peace to the galaxy. For this, we are here to honor him tonight.” With this last statement, Sidious gestured towards Vader. Everybody turned towards Vader and applauded loudly. As the applause died, attention was drawn back to the Emperor who continued his speech.

“Yes, well done Lord Vader. You have served this Empire well.” Sidious paused and then continued. “In honor of your continual devoted service, I would like to bestow a gift unto you. As High Commander of the Imperial Forces, there are few things of value I can give you. However, as High Commander you are very busy serving the Empire, so I decided to give you something that will help you with the other aspects of your life.” Vader stiffened, he was not 100 sure where his master was going with this, but he sensed he would not enjoy this gift.

Sidious continued his speech. “Ladies and Gentlemen. In commemoration to his service to the Empire, I bestow a slave to Lord Vader.” Sidious finished his speech by pointing in the direction of the main doorway. Vader stiffened as he turned to look at his gift. On a metal plank, four bearers carried a young woman scantily clad in a metal bikini into the building.

A dark blue silk fabric was attached to the bottom part of the bikini, and ran in between her legs. Her long brown hair was braided into a tight bun on top of her head, which she held up in defiance. Around her neck, a gold collar was visible. A chain dangled from this collar, and was attached to the metal plank, which forced her to remain sitting.

As the woman was brought into the room to be placed before Lord Vader, the media crews started taking pictures of her frantically. Additionally, gasps sounded as the guests recognized the woman. Throughout the hall, the name of “Senator Amidala” was whispered in shock.

Ch 4: The Slave Unleashed

A/N: For those of you who are curious, Vader's reasons for joining the dark side will be revealed as the story progresses. Also, a couple other questions were asked in the reviews, so I'll clear some of those up now. Anakin was never a Jedi, so he never met Obi-Wan. More on Anakin's past will be revealed later, since this is AU and I have to give you some background. As for how many Jedi survived, not many and they probably won't be playing a big role in this story. Thanks for reading everyone!

Chapter 4: The Slave Unleashed

The four bearers placed the metal plank holding Padmé down on the floor at Vader's feet. Vader stared down at his gift who was now glaring at him. The room fell silent as the crowd of people watched the slave and master gaze at one another. Soon the crowd averted their eyes from Padmé, and watched Vader instead. For many of them, Senator Amidala used to command a great deal of respect, but now that she was a common slave she was not worth their time. It would be improper and detrimental to their status in Imperial society if they consorted with her now.

Vader continued to stare down at his gift for another minute, showing no emotion to the angry woman before him. He broke the silence of the room when he addressed her bearers. "Take her to my quarters, I will deal with her later."

"As you wish, my lord," the bearers replied in unison.

As the bearers carried Padmé out of the Senate chamber to Vader's Coruscant apartment, Vader turned towards his master and knelt on the ground. "Thank you my master, I am deeply honored by your gift."

"You are welcome, my apprentice. Now, go see to your gift, I will adjourn this celebration."

"As you wish, my master."

Sidious smiled as he watched his apprentice leave the celebration. Everything had been perfect this evening. As a lowly slave girl, Amidala no longer commanded any power. Subjects of the Empire would look at her in disgust, and the rebels would not use her as a unifying point. The rebels used to rally around her due to the power she yielded, but the Emperor has stripped her of that, and he was thrilled. Additionally, by not killing her and allowing her to live, he had prevented her from becoming a martyr. This act will ensure that she cannot strengthen the irritating rebellion. Sidious smiled again, a gleam in his eye, knowing that the high media presence will ensure that everyone in the galaxy witnessed Amidala's demotion.

However, the thing that made Sidious most happy was that she was no longer his problem. His apprentice is off planet most of the time on missions for the Empire, missions that she will now attend. Sidious will hardly have to see Amidala ever again. Everything was perfect.

Sidious graciously thanked all of his guests for coming to the celebration, and took his leave to continue his private celebration over his victory with Amidala. Perhaps he should not have burdened his apprentice with that insufferable woman, but in the long run Sidious believed his decision was for the best interests of maintaining power in his Empire. Besides, his apprentice will probably enjoy being the master of a slave.

Darth Vader left the Emperor's party confused. Why would his master think he would want a slave, given his past? Vader might be a Sith Lord, but he did not promote or encourage slavery, given he himself had spent ten years of his life as a slave. His master should have understood this; after all it was he who had rescued him 13 years ago from that pitiful existence. Vader sighed. Perhaps meditation would help explain his master's motives, but before then, he had to go deal with his gift.

Darth Vader had a very lavish apartment, for someone who was barely on the planet for any length of time. He had a large penthouse on the top of the Senate apartments. Being the only resident on the top floor, Vader could have some privacy away from the eyes of the Senators below him. His master had given the apartment to Vader shortly after the Republic was disbanded and the Empire was created. Vader was pleased with the gift, but knew that his master had ulterior motives. With Vader's presence in the building, Sidious was ensuring that the Senators would bend to his will and follow Imperial rule.

Vader entered his apartment, and walked straight to his bedroom. Sitting on his bed was his new slave, former Senator Padmé Amidala if the whispers at the party were correct, still chained to her metal slab. As Vader walked towards the bed, he took off his cloak and threw it at a nearby chair. Padmé's brown eyes glared up at him as he approached her.

Vader looked her over in silence as he sat down on the bed next to her. He had to admit, he might not like the idea of having a slave, but at least his master picked somebody who was pleasant to look at. Vader shook his head to end his musings, and spoke to his gift.

"I know you are angry about all this. I did not know what my master had planned tonight, I can assure you of that. Additionally, you may find this hard to believe, but I understand what you are feeling right now."

Padmé snorted in angry laughter. This Sith had no idea how she felt. She had just been humiliated in front of the entire galaxy, and was now the slave to this scum. She suspected he was trying to be nice to her to get her to be more cooperative. Well, she was not going to obey any Sith, so she remained silent while he continued to talk.

Vader could feel her anger, and decided to start with some small talk before going ahead with his plans. "What is your name?"

Padmé did not answer.

“Tell me your name, or I’ll make one up for you. One I’m sure you’ll hate.” Vader persisted.

Padmé’s eyes narrowed at this as she answered in a haughty voice, “You may call me Senator Padmé Amidala.”

Vader smirked at her. “Well, milady.” He said stressing every syllable of the courtesy title. ‘I do not believe you are a Senator anymore, so I will call you Padmé.’ As an after thought, he added, “Get used to it.”

Vader could feel Padmé’s anger grow with his words, but continued to talk to her. “So, Padmé.” He paused for a moment and then continued. “I will have you know I have no need or desire to have a slave.”

Padmé glanced up at Vader, puzzled by this announcement. What did he plan on doing with her?

“However, I cannot give you back to the Emperor. He would be most displeased. He will also not let me give you up.” Vader paused to give Padmé an opportunity to take everything in. “So, here is how things are going to be. While on Coruscant, you will have your own room in these apartments. You will not be allowed to leave the apartment, but you can do what you please while here. If you need something, just ask and I will decide if you can or cannot have it.”

Padmé opened her mouth to spit out a retort, but Vader silenced her by continuing with his speech. “You will accompany me on my ship when I leave for missions. However, there is not enough space on board to give you a private room, so you will share quarters with me.”

Padmé seemed to narrow her eyes even more, if that was even possible. “There is no point in arguing about this, I cannot let you leave, and if I did where would you go? No one will take you in now that you have been demoted to a slave girl.” Vader added. “Now, if you hold still for a moment, I will take that collar off of you and show you to your room.”

Padmé did not say anything as Vader stood up from the bed. Unfortunately, he was right. Even if she could leave, no one would take her in. The Imperials would not want to be spotted with Vader’s slave girl. Her rebel friends might want to help her, but they could endanger their cause if they were caught helping her. Padmé was stuck under house arrest with the Sith Lord lackey. Just as she had resigned herself to her fate, she was startled and jumped at the sound of a lightsaber.

“Calm down, don’t move. Your collar is welded together, and this is the only way I can get it off. I promise I won’t hurt you, just stay still.” Vader explained.

In a quick movement, Vader expertly sliced through the collar, removing it from Padmé’s neck without leaving a burn on her. After the collar was removed, he offered his hand to her to help her stand so he could lead her to her room. However, she did not take it. She got off the bed, and stood by his side in defiance.

Vader rolled his eyes at her, and then stated, “Follow me.”

He led her to a room adjacent to his and allowed her to enter. “Stay here, I will try to get you some clothes to wear. I’ll check on you in a few hours.” He stated as he closed and locked the door behind her.

Ch 5: The Name Game

Chapter 5: The Name Game

Padmé took a seat in a chair in her new room, and mulled over everything Darth Vader had told her. Unfortunately, he was right. She had nowhere to go, she had to stay with him. She hated the prospect of living with a Sith Lord, but at least he was not treating her like a slave. Of course, this puzzled her as well. As far as she knew, Sith Lords were evil, and slavery did not bother them. It was odd, that Vader had released her of that task. Padmé sighed as she tried to figure out this puzzle. She temporarily gave up when nothing came to her. However, she knew she would be spending a lot of time with Vader, so perhaps she would learn more about him soon.

After securing Padmé's door, Vader strode to his comm. unit, to order some clothes for her from a local boutique. She may have looked nice in her bikini, but it was not practical, and he figured it was uncomfortable. Besides, if she was seen in that on his ship, it would only distract his crew. She needed something less revealing.

It was late in the evening, and all the stores on Coruscant were closed for the night. However, Vader was able to pull rank to get one to open just for him. He ordered two full wardrobes for Padmé, one to be delivered to his apartment, and the other to his ship. He did not want to be hauling luggage back and forth between his two homes, and this seemed like the best solution.

It would take a couple hours for the clothes to be delivered. In the mean time, Vader decided he would get some sleep since he had been awake most of the day. He smiled to himself at his thought that he would need all the rest he could get, since in a few hours, he would be dealing with his new companion.

Padmé examined her new home. As far as she could tell, the room layout was the same as Vader's. There was a large bed along one wall. The doorway was opposite to the bed. To the right of the door was a small table and a chair that she had sat at earlier. Along the right hand wall, was a closet, which would hold the clothes Vader said he would be getting her. There was no other furniture in the room, and Padmé wondered why Vader kept his rooms fairly empty. Another thing she could investigate later.

On the left hand side of her room, a door led to a small fresher. Having nothing else to do at the moment, Padmé decided to have a look at her reflection in the mirror in there. As she gazed at herself, Padmé slowly pulled her hair out of its tight bun and braid, to let it hang loose. As she worked on her hair, her mind mulled over the sudden change her life had taken, one more time.

A few hours ago, she had been Senator Padmé Amidala of the Naboo. She was a supporter of the Republic and a defender of liberty. Now she was only a lowly slave. Or was she? As Padmé gazed at herself in the mirror, she knew she had not changed since her demotion. She still had a strong desire to bring the Republic back, even if her ability to do anything had diminished. The Emperor had taken her title away, but not her resolve to fight against him. As she continued to gaze into the mirror, Padmé made a silent vow to herself to use her new position to aid the rebellion and her friends in restoring the Republic. The Emperor could not stop her, and she swore that he would rue the day he crossed her.

With that final thought, Padmé decided to take a quick shower. She knew that Vader had locked her door, but she did not know when he would come to release her. Removing her slave outfit, she quickly washed herself. However, since she did not have any other clothes at the moment, she was forced to redress herself in the slave outfit again. After she was dressed with her hair dried and combed, she had nothing else to do but wait for Vader to return. Not knowing when this would occur, she walked to the bedroom, crawled under the covers of the bed, and napped until his return.

Two hours after he had fallen asleep, Lord Vader was awoken by a presence he felt approaching his apartment. He quickly moved from his bed. His lightsaber was lying on top of the table in his room, and using the Force he called it to his hand as he moved. Over the years, Vader had learned to be extra cautious of possible rebel assassins coming to pay him a visit. However, when Vader opened the door to his visitor, it was not an assassin, but a very scared deliveryman. The man had brought the clothes Vader had purchased for Padmé.

Vader took his purchases from the deliveryman, who quickly fled from the Sith's presence. Vader smirked at the man's retreating back, amused by the fear he inspired. After his moment of revelry in the deliveryman's fear, Vader took his packages to the room he had given and imprisoned Padmé in earlier.

Unlocking the door and entering, Vader saw that Padmé was asleep on her bed. He dropped the clothes off on the nearby table. Padmé could put them away in the closet later. He then moved towards the bed to wake her up. However, she was not in a deep sleep and awoke before he was given the opportunity.

Pulling the blanket around her as she sat up in bed, Padmé posed a question to Vader. "I thought you said I would have free run of the apartment?"

"You can now, I just did not want you to do anything rash while you were in shock from all the changes forced upon you."

Padmé rolled her eyes at this. "You obviously don't know me very well."

"True, I don't know anything about you. Therefore I needed to be cautious." Silence followed this until Vader continued speaking, 'I have acquired some clothes for you. They are over on the table.' He gestured at the table and then continued again. "Another set is being delivered to my ship, so you won't need to pack anything when we move from one place to another."

"Fine." Padmé simply replied.

“Now, for some more rules. I know that you will be spending a lot of time with me. In fact, I forbid you to speak with anybody else unless I give you permission. For the most part, you will be confined to these apartments or my quarters on my ship, so this will not be an issue. I’m just making it clear how you are expected to behave.”

Padmé glared up at Vader, but before she could say anything he continued. “I am generally very busy, so you are not to disturb me. You will have to find ways to entertain yourself. You may talk to me when I am not busy, but if I refuse to answer your questions, you will drop the topic. Do I make myself clear?”

Padmé continued to glare at Vader as she stated, “Yes.”

“Good. Now, I am on leave for the rest of the week, so this is your opportunity to ask questions of me, before I am working again.”

Padmé thought for a moment, there were a lot of questions she wanted answered, but she wanted to be careful with what she asked first. She decided to keep it simple. “What is your name?”

“I am Darth Vader, Lord of the Sith.”

“No, not your Sith name. What is your real name?”

Vader was taken aback; no one had ever asked him this before. He had not used his other name since he had become a Sith. Why did she want to know? He was wary as to why she wanted the information, so he decided to evade her question. “I am Darth Vader, Lord of the Sith. There is no other name I go by.”

Padmé quirked an eyebrow at him as she responded, “You have not always been a Sith, what was your name before you were a Sith?”

“That name no longer has any meaning to me. You will address me as Lord Vader.”

“Why won’t you tell me your name?”

“Because I choose not to. Now you agreed to drop the topic if I refused to answer your questions.”

“I said I understood your rules, I never said I agreed to live by them.” Padmé replied with a smirk.

Vader glowered at her. This woman was going to cause him problems, but he would not yield. She would not get the answer she wanted.

“I don’t see why this is a big deal, you know my name.” Padmé stated. She realized this was going to become a battle of the wills, and she was now curious as to why he was hiding this simple piece of information from her. She would continue to press him on this issue. Getting comfortable, she shifted on the bed causing the blanket to shift off of her right shoulder.

“What is that?” Vader said, pointing at a welt on Padmé’s shoulder that he had not seen earlier.

Padmé glanced at her shoulder and casually said, “Oh, welt from my many whippings.”

“You lie! It wasn’t there earlier. What did you do to yourself?”

“You did not see it because your Master wanted them to be healed by now. There were too many, and they could not be healed in time for the celebration, so I was covered in makeup to hide the remaining marks. I took a shower and washed the makeup off while you had me locked in here, so now you can see the mark.”

“Who whipped you?” Vader asked.

Padmé laughed at him. “You know, for being second in command behind the Emperor, he sure doesn’t tell you much.” She paused, enjoying Vader’s puzzlement.

“Tell me. Who did this to you?” Vader asked again, a little more forcibly.

Padmé could refuse to answer, but she knew Vader could ask the Emperor and find out. So with a sigh, she told him the truth. “For the last three months, your dear, sweet Master...” she said sarcastically. “...has had me imprisoned for treason and has been interrogating me with a whip.”

His master had imprisoned her for treason, but then gave her to him. Why? He needed another question answered, because it may explain what his Master was thinking. “What was your treason?”

Padmé smiled. “I was a leader of the Rebel Alliance.”

Vader was silent, but his blue eyes turned sithly yellow from this admission. This explained his master. He had given Padmé to him, to aid in his hunt for the rebels. He could use her to destroy them!

“Tell me, where the rebels are.” Vader growled at her.

“No.”

Vader raised his right arm up, preparing to slap her, but before he could do this she interrupted him.

“Do you think hitting me, will make me talk? Your master has been doing that for three months. You have seen the evidence of that. I did not talk then, and I will not talk now.” Padmé had seen Vader’s eyes change colors, but continued to stare at him in defiance.

Vader was furious. He had no reply for her. In frustration, he lowered his arm, turned on his heel, and stormed out of her bedroom locking the door on her.

Padmé smiled as she spoke to the locked door, “So much for having free run of the apartment.”

Ch 6: Flesh to Metal

Chapter 6: Flesh to Metal

After Vader had locked Padmé's door behind him, he stormed to his meditation room. Once inside, he howled in anger. It was lucky that there was nothing in this room, because he was in such a rage, he could have thrown something.

Vader had not hit her, but a part of him wished he had. He thought taking his anger out on someone would make him feel better. Of course, he would have suspected the person to yield to him, and it was obvious that Padmé would never do that. She would never end her defiance, and that made Vader seethe in anger even more.

He looked down at the hand he had threatened Padmé with. It was a hand that brought fear to others who had faced it. He had used his metal appendage to threaten subordinates and vanquish his foes. However, the woman he had locked away in a nearby room did not even flinch at it. As Vader continued to stare down at his hand, he recalled the events that led him to replace his flesh with metal.

Thirteen years ago, he had been a slave boy on Tatooine. He was all alone in the world at the time. He had no father, and his mother had been killed by a band of Tusken Raiders.

Vader remembered watching the Raiders drag his mother's body from their hovel, while he lay helplessly battered and beaten on the floor. However, the Tusken's had not killed him, which became a grave mistake. No one should have been able to stand easily from those injuries, but drawing on his anger and hatred Vader had been able to pick himself up and chase after the Raiders. He killed the entire group, but it was too late for his mother. Before Vader could release her, her captors had murdered her.

Vader's anger grew. He hated the Raiders for killing his mother, but he was also angry with himself for his inability to stop it. As Vader returned to his life as a slave, he wallowed in his self pity and anger.

He may have continued to brood, but he was released from bondage when Chancellor Palpatine bought his freedom. The chancellor had told Vader that he sensed he had great potential. Palpatine seemed to understand Vader's feelings, and was supportive of the boy in his time of need. He commiserated with the boy, and gave him a new purpose in life.

Soon after Palpatine's rescue, Vader found himself on the distant planet of Coruscant, under the tutelage of Count Dooku, a friend of Palpatine's. Dooku had once been a Jedi Knight, but left the order due to their lack of vision. Vader had heard of Jedi Knights on Tatooine and had always longed to be one, but after the stories from Dooku he was glad that path was never laid before him.

Under Count Dooku, Vader was trained in wielding a lightsaber and manipulating the Force. Vader learned that it was the Force that had given him the strength to chase after his

mother's captors the night she was murdered. He realized that had he known more about the Force, he might have been able to save her. Vader vowed to himself, that in the memory of his mother he would learn as much as he could about the Force and use its power to prevent tragedies like hers. Over the next three years, Vader acquired new skills quickly and became a powerful manipulator of the Force.

At the end of his third year of training, Chancellor Palpatine called Vader to his office. Vader was told that Palpatine had some important information to give him. During this visit, Palpatine explained that the most powerful Force users in the galaxy were Sith Lords. He explained that with their power, the Sith Lords could bring order and security to the galaxy, things that the Republic and the Jedi had failed to provide for generations.

Vader was curious about the Sith because they could provide him with the power to fulfill the vow he made in his mother's memory. However he did not have to wait long, for the Chancellor quickly revealed himself as Darth Sidious Dark Lord of the Sith. Sidious stated that he had been using his position as Chancellor to slowly dissolve the Republic and replace it with an Empire. Sidious said it was his vision that the Empire would bring peace and prosperity to the galaxy.

Vader was awed by the Chancellor's revelation, and longed to join his side in this ambition. However, the Chancellor placed an obstacle in this path. He told Vader that only two Sith Lords could exist at a time. Only a master and his apprentice could possess the great power of the Sith, and he already had an apprentice. Vader's anger grew with the denial of power, while Sidious smiled at him.

Sidious explained that the only way he could take on another apprentice is if his current one was killed.

"Who is your apprentice?" Vader asked with a growl.

Smiling, Sidious stated, "Count Dooku."

Immediately, Vader ran from the Chancellor's office to find his teacher. He had lost his mother because he did not have the power to save her. He would not have power denied to him again; he would insure that it was his. Behind Vader's retreating form, the Chancellor smiled.

Vader soon entered the training room of his teacher, and drew his lightsaber in preparation of a duel.

"What are you doing?" Dooku asked.

"Taking what is mine." Vader replied.

"Which is?"

"Your title as a Sith Lord and your power."

Dooku was confused, only his master and himself knew that they were Sith Lords. He had not told Vader of his title, but why did his Master tell him. Perhaps he had underestimated his master, and failed to see his true intention with the young boy before him. "We shall see," Dooku replied, drawing his own Saber.

Vader ran towards Dooku, making the red blades of their sabers clash. Both twirled and danced around one another as they both expertly parried each other's attacks. Dooku may have been older with more experience in duels, but Vader had a natural talent with a saber and his youth gave him an edge physically.

For fifteen minutes the duel remained a stalemate. Neither Dooku nor Vader were taking control. Every attempt one made to attack, the other successfully blocked. The physical exertion of the duel was starting to take its toll, and both fighters were weakening.

"Release your anger, only your hatred can destroy him." Sidious's voice sounded from the doorway of the room.

Distracted, Vader glanced back to see Sidious smiling at him. However, in that brief lapse of conversation, Dooku pressed his advantage and sliced off Vader's right arm at the elbow.

"Argh!" Vader screamed as he fell to the ground cradling what was left of his arm. The pain was intense, but he knew he must continue to fight through it if he was to survive.

Dooku slowly approached his fallen student, readying himself for the kill. This boy was no match for him, and he had proven to his master how much more powerful he was. However, in his musings he failed to realize what Vader was doing.

Concentrating on all his anger and hatred for Dooku, Vader called upon the Force to help him. He called his lightsaber, still lying in the hand of his severed right arm, to his left hand. Dooku was approaching Vader with his lightsaber up, ready for a killing blow. However, before he could act, Vader used the Force to throw his saber at Dooku, impaling the Sith Lord through the chest with its blade.

In an instant, Dooku dropped his own saber and keeled over backwards. Carefully standing up, Vader walked over to his fallen teacher and pulled his ignited saber from Dooku's dead body. As he placed his saber on his belt, he heard Sidious call out from behind him.

"Good, good. Your hate has made you powerful. You shall be a great apprentice."

"Thank you, my master."

"Together, we will unlock all the mysterious powers of the Force and bring order to the galaxy. Now come my apprentice, let us take care of your arm."

"Yes, my master." Vader replied.

An hour later, Darth Vader, new Lord of the Sith had been refitted with a mechanical arm to replace the human one he had lost. To become a Sith, he had to lose a part of his flesh, but as Vader looked down upon his new arm he knew it would be worth the power he would gain in the long run. His mother had not died in vain, for he would now have access to great power.

Vader continued to stare down at his mechanical hand as he continued his musings. This hand had been with him for ten years since he killed Dooku. With it he had helped the Chancellor become Emperor and insure the security of people in the galaxy. People did not dare cross him, in fear that he would use his hand, his powers, to destroy them. All people

cowered except one; a woman locked a room away. A woman who held the information he needed to destroy the rebellion and bring peace to the Empire he helped build. Something needed to be done to make her talk, but before he could think further on the issue, his comm. unit rang.

Ch 7: The Master's Advice

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Darth Sidious could feel his apprentice's anger through the Force. He cackled softly, obviously Vader's gift was causing him problems. He wondered what Amidala had done to cause such a strong surge of anger from his apprentice. Intrigued, Sidious decided to contact his apprentice and learn more.

Vader quickly walked to his comm. unit, he could sense that it was his master calling. As Vader answered the comm., he knelt on the ground before the image of his master and spoke, "What is thy bidding, my Master."

Sidious smiled down at his apprentice as he replied, "Nothing at the moment my apprentice. I was just curious as to what has angered you. I do believe that every Force sensitive in the known galaxy could feel it."

"My gift was a rebel."

"Yes, I know." Sidious's smile grew. He thought that was the cause for Vader's anger.

"And she is insolent, stubborn, and will not reveal the location of her rebel friends."

Sidious cackled softly, "I see she has wasted no time in showing you her true nature."

"Why can we not kill her? She is defiant and even with her many beatings, still fails to be compliant."

"And she has told you of her imprisonment."

"Yes, my master."

"Well we cannot kill her, no matter how much both of us long to do so. She was a strong leader of the rebellion, and killing her will only give them a reason to unite together. Her death will only strengthen the rebellion, she can do less harm if she is kept alive."

Vader's anger increased with this admission, he longed to be rid of the woman. Perhaps he could persuade his Master to get rid of her a different way. "Very well, my master. But why did you make her my slave, why not keep her in prison?"

Sidious smiled. "By making her a slave I have demoted her in the eyes of everyone in the Republic. As a slave girl she will not influence citizens of the Empire to join the rebellion. I gave her to you for two reasons. First, given your past I thought you would enjoy being the master to someone." Vader stiffened slightly but remained silent as Sidious continued. "Second, as the military commander in charge of hunting the rebels, she may be of use to you."

“But she will never consciously betray the rebellion.” Vader replied, trying to hide his annoyance.

“I agree my apprentice, but if anyone can get the information from her, I believe it is you. Do what must be done, do not hesitate, and show her no mercy.”

“Yes, my master, but beating her does not seem to help.”

“Then look for other ways to break her, my apprentice.”

“Yes, my master.”

“Good.” Sidious smiled. “I will now leave you to your gift.”

As the image of his master faded, Vader quietly replied, “Yes, my master.”

Once Sidious ended his transmission with his apprentice, he walked over to his window to look at the night sky of Coruscant. Soon another day would dawn, a day in which his apprentice would face Amidala. Sidious cackled softly, for Amidala had no idea with whom she was dealing.

She may be very stubborn, but so was his apprentice. He had proven that ten years ago when he killed Count Dooku to become his apprentice. Vader would never give up on something once he put his mind to it, particularly if it undermined his power. Based on Sidious’s own experience with Amidala, he did not think she would ever give up the information on the rebellion, but Vader would make her life miserable in return.

Yes, her insolence was annoying, but the thought of her misery made the Emperor smile. As the Emperor turned from his window, he whispered into the night, “You have provoked me long enough Amidala, now you will know the true nature of the dark side. Good luck, my apprentice.”

With his transmission ended, Vader stood up and walked to Padmé’s room. He would take his Master’s advice and find new ways of extracting the information on the rebellion from her. He was not sure what he was going to do, but he would do anything to bring peace to the Empire.

Padmé had laughed for a few minutes at Vader’s outburst after he had locked her in her room for a second time. She knew she had made him angry, but she did not care. She would not betray the rebellion because it would please her housemate. He was going to have to get used to that. She sighed at this thought, and got up to put away the clothes he had given her.

After she finished that task, she went back to her bed to sit on it and think. She had been trying to get Vader to give her his real name, but he refused. This was very curious, and something she would have to explore further. She had other questions she wanted answered as

well, but they would have to wait. His evasion of giving her his name must have some significance, and she wanted to reveal it first.

Padmé was shaken from her musings an hour later when her door opened. She stared into the blue eyes of Darth Vader as he entered her room.

He walked to the foot of her bed. He stood still, glaring at her with his arms crossed over his chest. He did not say anything, and to Padmé it seemed that he was concentrating on something. Padmé decided to break the silence.

“Have you come back for another chat?” Padmé said with a smile.

Vader remained silent and continued to stare at her.

“Care to give me your name now?” Padmé asked.

Vader’s eyes flashed yellow before reverting back to blue once again. He did not move or say anything to her.

“You know, you are an exciting conversationalist.” Padmé pressed on, quirked her eyebrow as she spoke.

Vader still remained silent at this comment, but he turned on his heel and walked out of the room and locked it behind him.

“Pleasure talking to you too.” Padmé yelled at the door.

“Sith!” Vader yelled once out of earshot of Padmé’s door. He had tried to read her mind to get the information on the rebels, but she was too strong-willed for the mind trick to work. He had suspected as much, but a part of him wished that the trick would work. It would have saved him a lot of trouble, now he would have to think of something else. Unfortunately no ideas came to him, so he decided to wait until she was sleeping and try to read her mind again. Perhaps she would be more susceptible to the mind trick if she was unconscious.

A few hours later in his meditation room, Vader sensed that Padmé had fallen asleep. Now was his chance to try the mind trick again. He silently crept into her room and approached her sleeping form on the bed. He concentrated with all his might on extracting the information from her mind, but failed again.

He cursed under his breath at this failure. Unfortunately, his voice was loud enough that Padmé started to wake up. Not wanting to deal with her questions, he reflexively used the Force to suggest that she go back to sleep. Padmé fell back to sleep almost instantly.

Vader was surprised by this action. He had only performed the Force persuasion out of reflex; he realized as he did it that it would not work on the strong-willed woman before him. However, it had worked. He could not access her thoughts with a mind trick, but she would follow some Force suggestions. This perplexed him, something he would both need to look into and keep as reference in the future. Vader smiled, he now had a weapon against her annoying barrage of questions. With that thought, he left her room, happy that the evening had not been a total waste. He kept the door unlocked as he exited to his own bedroom to rest himself.

Ch 8: Apartment Standoff

Chapter 8: Apartment Standoff

Padmé awoke late the following morning, took a shower and changed into one of her new outfits. She was going to continue asking Vader about his real name, but her sleeping mind had come up with a new strategy. She would ask her other questions, and then subtly interject the issue of his real name. Hopefully she could catch him off guard and he would let his name slip.

After dressing herself she went to test her door. She was surprised to find it unlocked, she thought Vader had locked it during his last visit. However, she was not going to miss this opportunity to explore her new home.

Stepping out into the hall, Padmé turned left and walked towards a sitting room. Within the room, there were two sofas flanking a rectangular coffee table. However, this was the only furniture present. It seemed that Vader kept very little furniture in his apartment, since all the rooms she had seen had the bare minimum.

After the brief perusal of the sitting room, she walked into the adjacent dining room. Inside was a long table, with a chair set at each side. On the far end of the table from her sat Vader, reading through a series of datapads. It did not appear that he had noticed her, so she quietly tried to retreat back to the sitting room, but before she could turn to leave Vader called out to her.

“Come in and sit down. Your breakfast is on its way.” Vader said without moving his eyes away from his datapads.

Padmé did not say anything in response, but turned and took her seat at the opposite end of the table from him. She remained silent until a small blue domed droid entered carrying her breakfast.

“R2? What are you doing here?”

“Boop boop, beeeep.” R2D2 replied.

“The Emperor has confiscated most of your belongings, but did not seem interested in your droid. As long as you behave, you may keep him. He may stay with my droid, C3P0 when we are on board my ship.” Vader explained.

Padmé was shocked at Vader’s generosity. Just yesterday he had yelled and tried to hit her. This action seemed out of place with Vader’s previous actions.

Vader looked up from his datapads and smirked at Padmé’s speechlessness. She thought he was being generous. In reality, he had taken the droid apart earlier that morning in hopes of finding information on the rebels. Unfortunately, he did not find anything. He could have disposed of the droid, but it was in good working order and he sensed it could be helpful. Before Padmé had awoken, he put the droid back together and set him the task of making breakfast. Vader chuckled to himself at the thought that this droid could keep 3P0 entertained.

His protocol droid was a sissy, scaredy cat that spent more time whining about space travel than being useful. Vader should have changed that droid's annoying programming years ago, but maybe now he could annoy Padmé with him.

"Beep beep boop." R2 said as he placed Padmé's breakfast in front of her.

"Thank you R2," Padmé replied when he set her breakfast down.

With a "Beep," R2 left her side and dropped off a plate at Vader's side and then left the room.

"I'd like to know who I should thank for all of this." Padmé stated after starting her breakfast.

Vader looked up from his breakfast and replied, "For breakfast, R2."

"No, for allowing me to keep R2."

Vader rolled his eyes and sighed. She was back on her name questions. "I told you, I was letting you keep him as long as you behave. So if you are going to thank anyone its me."

Padmé did not say anything, but continued to stare at him.

Vader sighed, "You may as well get used to calling me Darth Vader, you will never get another name from me."

Padmé went back to her breakfast and remained silent. It was time to try some small talk on another topic. "I've noticed you have very little furniture in the apartment, is there a reason for this?"

Vader looked up at her, he had been expecting another barrage of name questions. He was pleased that she had changed the subject. "I don't stay her that often, so I do not need furniture. I am usually on board my ship. Besides, until recently it was only me living here, so I did not need a lot of things. Why, is there something you want?" Vader said as he quirked his eyebrow.

"No, I was just curious." Padmé replied. Then she fell silent as they both returned to finishing their breakfast.

After both Padmé and Vader had finished their meal, R2 came in and cleared the plates. Padmé remained sitting in silence, while Vader continued reading his datapads.

"What are you reading?" Padmé asked.

"Reports." Vader vaguely replied.

"What kind of reports?"

"Stuff of no importance to you."

"Is it about your next mission?"

"Perhaps."

They both remained silent for another moment before Padmé continued.

"How long are we going to be on your ship?"

“Depends on how fast I complete my mission.”

“Which is?”

Vader rolled his eyes at Padmé and sighed in exasperation, “Why should I tell you?”

“Well, I am going to be there with you.” Padmé bristled.

Vader chuckled, “Yes, you will be there. However, you will be confined to quarters, so you do not need to know what is happening.”

Padmé glared at him, which made Vader laugh at her some more. “Of course, if you would be cooperative, I might be able to give you some details.” Vader added.

“Cooperative in what way?”

Vader smiled as he stared over his datapads. “Tell me where the rebels are.”

“Never!” Padmé shouted.

“Fine, then you do not need to know what the mission plans are, so quit asking.” Vader replied tersely. Based on yesterday’s experience, Vader knew she would not answer him, but he was not about to pass on the opportunity to question her if she brought up the topic.

Padmé coldly stared back at Vader who had resumed his reading. He may not have told her directly what they were doing, but she knew he was hunting the rebellion. He could try as hard as he wanted, but he would never extract the information from her. However, while on board his ship she would need to do everything she could to distract him from completing his mission and harming her friends. She would think about this later, for now she decided to question Vader further.

“Why did you not want a slave?” Padmé asked.

“Because I do not need one.” Vader said as he continued reading from his datapad.

“Yes, you said that, but your Master has slaves and he does not need them. So what is your problem with them?”

“The Emperor is a busy man, I am sure he has uses for his slaves.” Vader replied dryly.

“Like you?” Padmé questioned.

Vader dropped the datapad he was reading with a loud clang and stood up from his chair. Pointing a finger at Padmé he angrily said, “I am nobody’s slave.”

“Really?” Padmé quirked an eyebrow at Vader and then continued. “Could have fooled me, you follow all of Sidious’s orders.”

“I choose to follow his orders.” Vader replied as his blue eyes changed to yellow.

“And what would happen if you chose to disobey him?”

Vader growled in anger, he had had enough of Padmé’s questions. Waving his hand in the air, he directed a Force suggestion to her to get her to fall asleep.

Padmé smiled at him and replied with a hint of laughter, “You think your mind trick will work on me?”

Vader was shocked. His mind trick had worked yesterday, or had it? Now that he thought about it, she must have been sleepy enough just to fall asleep again. After all she had spent most of the evening awake arguing with him. Realization dawned on Vader, that what power he thought he had over Padmé did not exist.

Vader was distracted from his thoughts when Padmé added, “You cannot stop me that easily.”

That was it; Vader was not going to take any more provocation from her. He stalked over to her chair, roughly grabbed her by the upper arm and dragged her back to her room. Along the way Padmé made snide remarks about him as she tried to release his grasp on her.

As they approached her door, she yelled, “Let me go!” and kicked Vader hard in the shin. Vader howled in a mixture of pain and fury as he quickly opened the door and unceremoniously shoved her inside.

Pointing his finger at her sprawled form on the floor he yelled, “You will stay here until you learn some respect.” With that he shut the door and locked it behind her. He then stalked off to finish his reports on the rumored whereabouts of the rebellion.

Ch 9: Moving to the Executor

Chapter 9: Moving to the Executor

“You will stay here until you learn some respect.” Padmé recalled with a hint of laughter, the last words Vader had said to her before he locked her in her room. She was not going to be sweet and compliant and Vader could not change that. Additionally, Vader would have to let her out when he was sent on a mission, so his threat was not very credible. She would only have to be patient for a little while longer.

Several days had passed since Vader had locked her in the room. He had not returned to release her, but R2 came in a couple times a day to bring her a meal. He was also able to sneak in some holo books so that Padmé had something to read in order to keep her entertained.

Over the past few days, she had read through each holo book twice, and was just getting ready to reread the first one again when her door opened. Standing in the doorway was Vader.

“Where did you get that?” Vader barked at her as he walked into the room and pointed at the holo books.

Vader turned around when R2 started to angrily beep at him from behind, “Beep beep boop boop beeeeeeeeeeep!”

Vader turned around and glared at Padmé.

“R2 gave them to me.” Padmé tersely replied.

Pointing at her, Vader replied, “Next time you will ask for permission.” Padmé glared at him, but Vader turned on his heel to face R2 without responding to her displeasure. “Do I make myself clear?” Vader asked the droid.

“Boop.” R2 responded.

“Good.” Vader replied, and then turned around to face Padmé. ‘We are leaving for my ship this afternoon. There is a handmaiden outfit included in your wardrobe. Wear it! It has a cloak that should hide your identity.’ He then pointed his finger at her, and waved it at her threateningly. “I will not have you making a spectacle of yourself. If you try, you will regret it.”

Padmé quirked an eyebrow at him, but remained silent.

“I shall return in a few hours, make sure you are ready.” Vader barked at her and then turned on his heel and exited the room.

Three hours later, Vader returned to Padmé’s room. She had dressed in a blue handmaiden outfit. Her matching cloak covered her hair and helped hide most of her face from view.

“Come, we are leaving.” Vader said.

Padmé followed him out of her door, while R2 followed behind her. They walked in silence out of the apartment and to a nearby turbolift. The only sound audible was the mechanical hum coming from R2.

Once all three were in the turbolift on their way to the ground floor and the nearby landing platforms, Vader spoke to Padmé. “We are taking my private shuttle up to my flagship, the Executor. Once there I will take you to my quarters, where you will stay while I do some things on ship. You will speak to no one on board. Do I make myself clear.”

“Yes.” Padmé said with annoyance in her tone.

“I repeat, you will not speak to anyone.”

“Yes.” Padmé responded.

The turbolift doors opened, as Vader replied, “Good, now follow me.”

They exited the apartment, and took a short walk to a nearby landing pad. Upon it was Vader’s personal imperial shuttle. Vader boarded first and headed straight to the pilot’s chair. Padmé entered next and took the copilot’s chair next to Vader, while R2 stayed in the cargo area of the ship. Padmé remained silent as Vader fired up the ships engines, and they took off into Coruscant’s skyline.

In no time, they had left the planet’s atmosphere and were in space above the ship. In the distance, Padmé could see the Executor through the view port. Padmé continued to gaze at her new home as Vader expertly piloted his shuttle to his flagship.

He landed the shuttle in a loading area of the Executor. A contingent of storm troopers and high-ranking officers aboard the ship were there to greet him. Padmé stood up from her chair and turned to exit the shuttle, but before she could move Vader grabbed her upper arm.

“Walk behind me and remain silent. Do not make eye contact with anyone.” Vader instructed.

Padmé glared angrily into his blue eyes, but remained silent. Vader turned from her and quickly exited his ship with Padmé following him. R2 closely followed Padmé.

At the end of the shuttle’s exit ramp, an Admiral greeted Vader, “Welcome Lord Vader, I am honored to be of service to you again.”

“You may dispense with the pleasantries Admiral. Get back to your post along with everyone else, I want you all prepared to leave shortly. I will join you at the bridge shortly.” Vader replied.

“As you wish my lord.” The Admiral said with a bow.

Vader continued to walk quickly through the ship, with Padmé following him. She tried to keep track of where they were, but the pace was too fast for her to memorize directions. It seemed like five minutes had passed by before Vader abruptly stopped at a doorway. He turned to Padmé and said, “This is my quarters...”

“Lord Vader! I need you to sign off on these technical readouts.” A young lieutenant interrupted Vader.

Vader quickly opened the door to his quarters and barked at Padmé, “Get in!” He then turned to the lieutenant, and started to yell at him that the readouts could have waited and he was never to interrupt him again.

Padmé stepped into Vader’s quarters with R2. The door closed behind her, while Vader continued to berate the lieutenant. In the meantime, Padmé decided to explore her new home.

Before her was a formal sitting room. Like Vader’s apartment on Coruscant, there was very little furniture in here, only a couple sofas and a coffee table. To the left of this room was a doorway, and Padmé entered through it.

Inside was Vader’s bedroom. This was setup like the rooms in Coruscant except there were several bookshelves filled with holovids, and what looked like reports. Additionally, along one wall, was a large screen for viewing holovids and watching Imperial network shows. A sofa faced the screen. Obviously it was true that Vader spent more time on ship than on Coruscant, since he had more amenities here.

Padmé glanced into the fresher attached to the bedroom, which looked exactly like the one in her room and then exited the bedroom to explore the rest of Vader’s quarters. Once back in the sitting room, she saw only two doors. The first one was a fairly empty room. It looked like it may be used for storage. Padmé noticed some spare droid parts in it as she exited.

Finding nothing exciting in the first room, she walked through the second door, which housed a fairly large kitchen. R2 entered into the room behind her as she looked around. To the left was a small square table with two chairs. Along the wall in front of her were a series of countertops and food storage devices. As she glanced to her right she saw a golden droid approaching her.

The droid realized Padmé was glancing at him and greeted her, “Hello, I am C3P0, Human Cyborg Relations. Who may I ask are you?”

“I’m Padmé.”

“Miss Padmé, a pleasure to meet you.” The droid replied cheerily.

“Boop boop beep.” R2 interjected.

“R2D2, pleasure to meet you too. Are you friends of Master An...”

“3P0!” Vader barked from the doorway, making both Padmé and C3P0 jump in surprise. “You know you are not allowed to use that name, and our guests are not to know of it.”

“Yes, sir.” C3P0 replied apologetically.

“Padmé and R2 will be staying with us aboard ship, go find a place for R2 to stay.”

“Yes sir, right away. Follow me R2.” C3P0 replied as he quickly exited the kitchen. R2 followed him, but glanced back at Padmé who gave him a reassuring nod before he exited.

Padmé was disappointed, C3P0 had almost revealed Vader’s true name. Perhaps she would be able to talk to him and get the information when Vader was not around.

Vader interrupted Padmé's scheming, "You have full run of these quarters. You may do what you like while here. You may even watch the holovids and read through the reports in my bedroom." Padmé quirked an eyebrow at this, but Vader quickly explained, "They are all unclassified."

Vader walked towards the door and directed Padmé to follow him. He walked into his bedroom and continued speaking, "I sometimes use the sitting room for meetings, so I can not have you out there during those times. Sometimes the meetings are unexpected, so you will have to sleep in here. You may have the bed when I am not here, but otherwise you will have to sleep on the couch. I will lock the bedroom door if I am having a meeting, so you cannot interrupt me. If you need anything, speak to 3P0. He should be able to help you."

Padmé nodded at this. Then Vader spoke again, this time in a harsher tone, "And do not try to ask him my name, I am leaving here to wipe his memory of it, so you will not find it from him."

Padmé glared at Vader while he smirked at her. "After I tend to 3P0, I am going to ready the ship for the mission, so you will be on your own. Do not try to leave these quarters. I will find out about it, and then I will have to lock you in the detention area." With that final statement, Vader turned and left his bedroom, leaving a furious Padmé behind.

Ch 10: Life Aboard Ship

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Padmé did not leave the bedroom after Vader left. She had no reason to do so, since she was imprisoned within these few rooms. She decided to see what was on the Imperial Networks. Sitting on the sofa, she turned on the holo screen with a small remote and began flipping through channels. However, all she found were a couple news channels and a sports channel that only featured pod racing. Padmé refused to watch the news channels because their stories were highly biased in favor of the Empire. She did not think the pod racing was biased, but she did not know anything about the sport, so she decided not to watch it either.

Standing from the sofa, she walked over to Vader's collection of holovids. He had a vast collection of dramas, war epics, and much to Padmé's surprise a few comedies. Padmé mused that perhaps the comedy holovids were to compensate for Vader's own personal lack of a sense of humor. Padmé smiled at that thought, but then returned to the task of selecting a holovid. In the end she selected a drama where a Jedi Knight and Government official fall in love, but their relationship ends in tragedy. After placing the holovid in its player, Padmé sat back on the sofa to watch the film.

Meanwhile, on the bridge of the ship, Vader was directing his crew.

"Are there any new developments in locating the rebels since the reports you sent me earlier this week?" Vader asked to an intelligence officer.

"No my lord."

"Very well. Inform me immediately if you receive new information." Vader said, and then turned to his Admiral. "Admiral, set our course for Dantooine."

"Dantooine? Why Dantooine?"

"That is the rumored location of the rebels according to our latest intelligence. Why is there a problem, Admiral?" Vader said with a hint of menace.

Shakily the Admiral responded, "No, no problem my lord. It shall be done." The Admiral finished by bowing to Vader.

"Good."

Turning his attention to a group of captains, the Admiral said, "Set our course for Dantooine."

"Yes sir." They responded in unison.

Padmé was nearing the end of her holovid. The Jedi and the government official had confessed their love to each other, but were now hiding their love from the public. Padmé found the premise interesting, but knew that in reality it would never happen. Jedi were trained from birth to avoid attachments, so you would never see a lovesick Jedi like the one in the film. No Jedi would ever obsess over one person like that; it was not in their nature, but Padmé conceded that it did make for an interesting holovid. Caught up in her holovid, Padmé did not realize that C3P0 and R2D2 had entered the bedroom.

“Miss Padmé, is there anything that you require?” C3P0 said.

“Huh?” Padmé replied as she quickly paused the holovid. ‘Oh, 3P0.’ She said as she looked up at the golden droid. “What time is it?”

“Late evening milady, R2 and I were wondering if you were hungry.”

“Boop beep boop beep beep.” R2 interjected.

At that moment, Padmé’s stomach growled. “Yes, I think something to eat sounds good. I’m going to go to the kitchen and see what is available, you two can help if you want.”

Padmé stood up from the sofa and walked out the bedroom door to the kitchen on the other side of the main sitting room. While she rummaged through the kitchen for something to eat, she asked C3P0 some questions.

“3P0, what do you know about your master?”

“Oh! Well he’s commander of this ship and seems to be very knowledgeable in mechanics.” Replied C3P0.

“How did you end up in his possession?”

“He built me when he was very young.”

“Really?”

“Yes.”

“Has he always been called Lord Vader, or did he ever have another name?”

“Not that I am aware of milady.”

Padmé fell silent in disappointment. She had hoped Vader’s declaration that he would wipe C3P0’s memory was only a threat. However, she should have known he would go through with it since he had been avoiding the question with her since they first met.

Padmé pulled the stuff she needed for her evening meal, and set to prepare it with 3P0 and R2’s help. When she had finished C3P0 asked, “Is there anything else you require, Miss Padmé?”

“No 3P0, thank you.” Padmé replied. Then she took her meal back to the bedroom to finish watching her holovid.

Vader walked into his quarters late in the evening after spending the entire afternoon and early evening directing his crew. He walked into his kitchen to get a quick bite to eat, and then walked to his bedroom to check on his houseguest and get some sleep.

When Vader entered his bedroom, he noticed the holoscreen was on, but was not playing anything. The holovid that had been playing had finished, but had not been removed from the player. Looking down at the couch, Vader saw that Padmé had fallen asleep. Her head was resting on one of the couch's throw pillows. Vader smiled, he liked her when she was asleep. She was peaceful and did not ask him annoying questions. Just as Vader was about to walk away from her, she shivered slightly in her sleep.

Using the Force, he opened the closet and floated a blanket toward him. He then gently draped the blanket over her, careful not to wake her up. Once he was sure she would not awaken, he turned off the holoscreen and placed the holovid back on his bookshelf. Then, he went to change into his own sleepwear and went to bed.

Ch 11: The Calm Before the Storm

Chapter 11: The Calm Before the Storm

Padmé awoke early the next morning. Last night after her holoovid was over, Padmé had slumped back on the couch's pillows just to relax and stretch out for a minute. She realized she must have fallen asleep. Padmé glanced over at the holoscreen that she had forgotten to turn off, but found that it was blank. Additionally a blanket had been thrown over the top of her. Padmé smiled, she would have to find out which one, R2 or C3P0, had done all this and make sure she thanked them for making her comfortable.

Padmé got up from the couch and neatly folded her blanket, before placing it back on the couch. As she walked to the fresher to tidy herself up a bit before breakfast, she glanced at Vader's bed. The bed was perfectly made and appeared that nobody slept in it. Padmé assumed that Vader had been busy with the ship and never went to bed. This thought made her happy, because she did not enjoy the idea of sharing a room with him.

As a Sith Lord who served the Empire, he was her enemy and as such she did not trust him. Additionally, his secretive nature did not facilitate a sense of trust either. Although Vader had only locked her in her bedroom on Coruscant rather than harm her, she did not know what he would do to her now, since space was limited aboard the ship. Therefore, the fact that he did not sleep in the bedroom last night pleased her because it meant she might be able to avoid him most nights while aboard the ship. That way, she would never have to find out what he would do to her in his anger. With a smile, Padmé walked into the fresher, cleaned herself up and then walked to the kitchen for breakfast.

As Padmé walked into the kitchen, she bumped into R2. "Sorry R2." She said. "Thanks for taking care of the holoovid last night, and finding me a blanket."

"Boop boop beep boop beep? Beep boop boop boop." R2 replied.

"Miss Padmé, he did not touch the holoovid, or get you a blanket last night." C3P0 interjected from the right hand side of the kitchen.

"Oh! Sorry 3P0, I guess I should be thanking you."

"Miss Padmé, neither R2 or I entered the bedroom after you took your evening meal back there." C3P0 replied.

Padmé gave a puzzled look at this information. Neither 3P0 nor R2 had been in that room, then who had switched off the holoovid and found her a blanket? She turned to the left of the kitchen to go sit at the table and think about this information, but her jaw dropped at the sight before her.

Darth Vader had come home during the night, for he sat at the far end of the table before her. He was reading a datapad and casually munching on his breakfast with a smirk upon his face. Padmé narrowed her eyes at him. The sneaky Sith Lord had been playing with her this

morning, making her believe he was not around. She glared at him in both annoyance and irritation.

However, her glare softened as she continued to stare at Vader. Vader was shirtless and was only wearing a pair of black sleep pants and a black glove over his right hand and forearm. Padmé had never seen him like this and she marveled at the image of his sculpted chest and abdomen. Her eyes trailed up and down his arms and chest, and she wondered how he maintained all those muscles.

Vader noticed that Padmé had paused and looked up at her quizzically. “Are you ok?” Vader asked when he noticed she had a glazed look to her eyes.

Padmé shook her head at the sound of Vader’s voice. He had broken the trance the sight of his body had placed on her. “Yes.” She tentatively replied in response to Vader’s question. She then quickly sat down at the table across from him and averted her eyes, careful not to look at him.

R2 came over and set a plate down in front of Padmé with her breakfast. “Thank you R2.” Padmé said automatically, her brain trying to process what she had just done. She had stared at Darth Vader and mused that he was attractive. She could not believe she could ever have pictured Vader as anything but a monster and she was disturbed by her lapse in judgment. How could she think such things of a man who helped destroy the Republic?

Vader looked up from his datapad again and looked at Padmé. She did not seem to take any notice of him because she seemed to be deep in thought. Based on the distressed look on her face he surmised that something was troubling her. He smiled at the thought of her discomfort, she had been making him crazy for the last few days and she deserved to be miserable. However, he was curious about what had brought on her distress.

“You are awfully quiet, is something wrong?” He asked as he quirked his eyebrow at her.

Padmé looked up into his blue eyes and hastily replied, “No, no problem. Why would you think that?”

“Because you have a troubled look on your face, and by now you usually would have asked me a series of pointless questions.” Vader chuckled.

Padmé narrowed her eyes at Vader as he laughed at her distress. However, she was also relieved to have this opportunity to be angry with Vader because she reasoned that it meant that she was not attracted to him. He might be easy on the eyes, but his attitude made him impossible to like. Vader was a Sith Lord, and as such was her enemy. Padmé’s worry ceased at this thought as she defiantly stared back at Vader and said, “I have a lot of things on my mind, none of which is of any importance to you.”

Vader noticed the tension leave Padmé’s face, but he decided to try to get an answer from her about the rebels even though she would most likely ignore him. “Really? Well if one of those unimportant thoughts,” he said sarcastically. “Are about the rebels, then I would not mind and would be highly interested in hearing about it.” He added.

Padmé’s anger rose, “I will never tell you that.”

Vader smirked at her, “Very well I will have to find another way to get the information I need.”

Padmé threw Vader a disgusted look before she started eating her breakfast. Vader went back to reading his datapad. After a few moments of silence, Vader spoke up.

“How was your holovid last night?”

“It was good. Why, what did you think of it when you first watched it.”

“I have never watched it, in fact I have never watched any of the holovids in my collection.”

“Then why do you have them?”

Vader shrugged, “I get them for free. If I watch anything, it’s podracing.”

Well, Padmé thought, she now had an explanation for the channels on the Imperial Network. Both Padmé and Vader sat in silence for a moment until Vader restarted the conversation.

“If I did watch any of my holovids, it probably would not be that one. Based on the summary it was not very realistic.” Vader stated offhandedly.

“Yes that is true, Jedi do not form attachments, so he would not have fallen in love. However, the tragedy of their love made a very moving story.” Padmé stated.

“That wasn’t what I was thinking,” Padmé quirked one of her eyebrows at Vader as he continued to speak. “I was thinking that if government officials are as annoying as you, then no Jedi would ever want to fall in love with them.” Vader finished with a smirk.

Padmé glared at him as she changed the subject, “Why are you wearing that black glove?”

Vader laughed as Padmé tried to change the subject. He had won an argument, and she did not know how to retort back. He was pleased at this and smiled as he replied to her question. “It’s covering my mechanical arm. My real arm was cutoff during a duel.”

Padmé’s eyes narrowed as she sarcastically said, “Pity they did not kill you.”

Vader laughed at this comment, “Yes, it is a shame I’m starting to regret it myself. If I had been killed you would now be his problem instead of mine.”

Padmé glowered at Vader as he continued to laugh at her. “Well I am your problem.” Padmé said sarcastically emphasizing each word. “Now why don’t you explain to me why you won’t tell me your real name?”

Vader sighed in exasperation, “It is no longer my real name. Why do you want to know so bad?”

“I just do.”

Vader studied Padmé’s face at this remark. In the scheme of things his former name did not seem to be a significant piece of information to divulge. However, Padmé was a former leader of the rebel alliance and although she was stuck living with him he did not know if she had other motives for knowing his former name. He did not trust her, and he would not answer her. Besides, no one in the Empire except the Emperor knew that name and he felt no need for someone else to have that information about his past.

“That is not a good enough reason. Now if you’ll excuse me I have work to do.” Vader said as he stood up and walked out of the kitchen. Leaving Padmé to finish her breakfast alone.

Ch 12: The Battle over Dantooine

Chapter 12: The Battle over Dantooine

When Vader left, Padmé pondered their previous conversation. He stated that he would not give her his name because no one else in the Empire knew it. Padmé reasoned that Vader was hiding his former self with his new identity of Darth Vader. His master had done a similar thing by hiding his evil nature with his false identity of Palpatine. If Vader was hiding his true identity with that of an evil persona perhaps deep down there was a good person underneath the monster. Padmé decided to explore this idea further in her next meeting with Vader.

Having finished her breakfast, Padmé returned to the bedroom and pulled out an outfit to wear for the day. She then headed to the fresher to take a long hot shower. However, the door was locked. She surmised that Vader must be in there getting ready for the day. Padmé went to sit on the couch and wait for him to finish his shower.

Vader emerged from the fresher a few minutes later, fully dressed. Part of Padmé was disappointed that he was fully clothed, the other part was angry with herself for having such thoughts. Vader walked to the nearby closet to find his cloak, while Padmé walked to the fresher. She did not notice that Vader glanced at her as the door shut behind her.

As Vader walked to the bridge to begin the day's work his comlink rang. "Yes." He answered.

"My lord, our ship has reached Dantooine," the Admiral stated.

"Good, I will be there shortly." Vader replied and ended his transmission.

As Vader swept onto the bridge, he called out to the Admiral, "What is our status?"

"Our scout ships have found a rebel base on the far side of the planet. Unfortunately, it is a smaller base and we do not believe that any of the rebel leaders are in it. However, they do not seem to be aware of our presence."

"Good. Orbit the planet, but do not attack until I order it."

"As you wish my lord."

Vader looked out the view port at the planet of Dantooine. Another rebel base, but no leaders, Vader sighed to himself. Attacking this base might hurt the rebellion, but without killing its leaders, they would continue to fight the Empire. He was not having any luck in finding the leaders, however he did know someone who did know their whereabouts. Perhaps he could use the upcoming battle to his advantage.

Vader turned to a nearby lieutenant and spoke to him, "Lieutenant."

"Yes my lord." The lieutenant said with a salute.

“Go to my quarters. There is a woman there by the name of Padmé. Bring her here.”

“As you wish my lord.” The lieutenant replied as he exited the bridge.

After the lieutenant left, Vader returned his gaze to the planet outside the ship.

Padmé had just finished her shower and went back to the bedroom when C3P0 and R2 both entered the room.

“Miss Padmé, there is a gentleman out here who wishes to speak to you.” C3P0 stated.

Puzzled, Padmé walked out into the sitting area to find a young lieutenant waiting for her.

The lieutenant greeted her and then spoke, “Milady, Lord Vader requests your presence on the bridge.”

“Why?”

“He did not say. I was only instructed to escort you there.”

“Fine, give me a minute to get my cloak.”

Padmé went back to the bedroom to get the cloak of her handmaiden outfit. She was not wearing the outfit, but since Vader had made a big deal of her being covered up when she was taken to the ship she figured she better stay covered up on the bridge to avoid any potential unpleasantness. She wondered why Vader wanted to see her. Padmé threw the cloak over herself, brought the hood over her face, and then met up with the lieutenant in the sitting room.

“Are you ready, milady?”

“Yes, Lieutenant.”

“Good, follow me.”

“We are in position my Lord.” The admiral said to Vader.

“Hold here.”

“Yes, my Lord.” The admiral stated automatically. He was puzzled as to why they were not attacking yet.

A few minutes later, Padmé and the young lieutenant Vader had sent to get her had entered the bridge.

Padmé walked up to Vader, “You asked to see me?”

Vader turned to her, “Yes I did. Do you know that planet?” He asked while pointing out the view port.

Padmé gasped. She did know that planet; they were in orbit over Dantooine, and by the looks of it directly over its rebel base.

“Based on your response, I’ll assume you do know the planet. We are going to destroy the rebel base.”

Padmé stared up at Vader in horror and shouted at him, “You monster! Hundreds of people will die!”

“A necessary loss to restore order and peace to the galaxy.” Vader replied.

“What peace? There has been no peace since the fall of the Republic!”

“An end to the rebellion could bring peace. Tell me who the leaders are and I will spare the people down there.”

“Liar! I know the ways of the Sith! If I tell you the names of the leaders you will not hesitate in destroying the base before pursuing them.” Padmé shouted.

The crew onboard the bridge had turned from their duties to listen to Vader and Padmé’s argument.

“I promise not to attack the base if you tell me the names of the leaders.”

Padmé snorted in angry laughter, “Promises from a Sith are not worth much. Your master promised to keep the Republic intact, but then he destroyed it.”

“The Republic was useless, it could not protect the people under it like the Empire can.” Vader said, his own anger creeping into his voice.

“We are not safe under the Empire! We cannot exercise our freedom. As your slave, I am an excellent example of that.” Padmé shouted.

Vader flinched at the slave comment before he shouted back at her, “I have never treated you as a slave! Now, will you tell me the names of the rebel leaders or will I be forced to destroy the rebel base.”

“I will never tell you.” Padmé stated coldly.

Vader’s blue eyes shifted to yellow as he stated, “So be it!” Then he turned to his admiral. “Fire when ready.”

“As you wish my lord.” The admiral turned to the rest of the crew and shouted, “Battle stations! Concentrate all your firepower on the rebel base.”

Padmé watched in horror as The Executor’s lasers rained down on the rebel base. Tears fell from her face as she thought of all the people who would lose their lives.

Fifteen minutes after the attack, scout troopers reported that the entire base was destroyed and that there were no survivors. At this declaration, Padmé turned from the view port and walked over to Vader who was now standing near a computer console. Vader looked up into her tear-streamed face with no remorse.

“How could you?” Padmé shouted as she slapped Vader’s face.

The crew stood in stunned silence as the slap sounded throughout the bridge.

Vader fixed his yellow eyes on Padmé, and then turned to the lieutenant who had brought her here earlier and coldly stated, “Lieutenant, take her back to my quarters.”

Silently, the lieutenant pulled Padmé out of the bridge and escorted her back to Vader's quarters.

That night, neither Padmé nor Vader spoke to each other. Padmé was furious at Vader's heinous act and Vader was angry that Padmé had forced him to destroy the rebel base.

Vader retired to his bedroom early since he would have to be up early the next morning to file his report with his Master. He left Padmé in the kitchen, who continued to brood over the day's events.

Padmé could not believe that Vader would kill hundreds of innocent people who were working to restore freedom to the galaxy. No decent person could do that, he truly was a Sith monster. She had to do something to stop him from doing this to anybody else.

Padmé left the kitchen and entered the bedroom. She glanced over at the small table on her right and saw Vader's lightsaber hilt. An idea formed in her head at the sight, and she quickly grabbed the saber and silently crept towards Vader's sleeping form on the bed.

Vader was sound asleep, and did not notice when Padmé entered the bedroom. He did not stir as she crept nearer to him, and he did not awaken as she readied herself to take action. However his eyes opened when he heard a familiar snap hiss.

Ch 13: Two Points of View

Chapter 13: Two Points of View

For a split second, Vader stared at the red glow of his lightsaber as it glowed ominously close to his neck. Then he moved his eyes to Padmé's, which stared back at him with ferocity.

"What are you doing?" Vader asked calmly.

"Killing you!" Padmé yelled as she moved the lightsaber closer to Vader.

However, before she could strike his flesh, Vader grabbed her wrists. Then using the Force, he turned off his saber and flung it from her hands. It landed with a clunk on the floor opposite of the side of the bed from where Padmé stood.

In losing her weapon, Padmé gave a frustrated growl of anger as she struggled against Vader's grip which he tightened as he sat up. "Murderer!" Padmé shouted as she continued to fight Vader's hold on her. "Evil Sith, you don't deserve to live! The rebellion always tries to take prisoners first rather than killing Imperials when possible. You slaughtered them without even flinching!"

Padmé continued berating Vader while he maintained his hold on her. For his part, Vader remained silent keeping his eyes on Padmé's while she yelled at him. After five minutes, it appeared that Padmé had worn herself out because she quit struggling against Vader and she fell silent as tears streamed down her face.

Cautiously, Vader loosened his grip on Padmé. However, before he could do anything, she wrenched her hands from him, and slapped him with her right hand. Snarling in anger, Vader stood up quickly from the bed and grabbed Padmé before she could escape from him. They stared at each other, anger evident on both their faces.

Padmé dug her fingernails into the flesh of Vader's upper arms, but this failed to break his grip on her. "Let me go, you monster!" She shouted as she kicked him in the shin as hard as she could. Vader's eyes flashed yellow and he flung Padmé back onto his bed.

Once she hit the bed, Padmé tried to quickly retreat, but found escape impossible when Vader pinned her body. His hands held her forearms on either side of her head preventing her from lashing out at him. In addition, he blanketed the rest of his body on top of hers to prevent her from moving. Padmé defiantly stared up into Vader's yellow eyes as she continued to fight him.

"You can quit struggling, there is no escape." Vader said coldly as his yellow eyes slowly shifted back to blue.

"Let me go!" Padmé shouted.

"And what would you do if I did?" Vader said with a hint of irritation.

"I'd kill you!"

“Why?”

“You murdered innocent people! You do not deserve to live! If I don’t stop you, you will only kill again!”

“Those people were not innocent, they were traitors to the Empire. Rebels, who are threatening the peace of the galaxy.” Vader replied.

“They are restoring the peace and freedom the Empire destroyed.” Padmé replied coldly as her brown eyes flashed in anger.

Vader sighed in exasperation, “So, how does killing me help the situation?”

Padmé glared up at him, “You will never be able to hurt another soul again.”

“Perhaps, but there will be others to replace me.”

Padmé opened her mouth to retort, but closed it again when she realized Vader was right. If she succeeded in killing him, the Emperor would only get a new Sith Apprentice to take his place. Destroying a Sith Apprentice was useless unless the Sith Master was destroyed as well. With Sidious still alive, the killing would continue and Padmé could do little to stop it. She would not be able or allowed to kill all of the Sith Lords.

Vader could feel Padmé’s resignation, and knew that the danger from her death threats had passed. He watched as tears fell from her face as she realized that his death would not end the deaths of her rebel friends. Vader released his hold on Padmé, and sat next to her on the bed as she fought with her emotions.

“I have watched people I know be killed because others were powerless to help them. By fighting the rebellion, the Empire is protecting its citizens. You may disagree with our methods, but by using our power we can protect the masses.” Vader said as he stared blankly at the opposite wall. “I will not let a small group harm the citizens I serve. I failed once, and I will not fail again.” Vader said with conviction as he stood from the bed.

Padmé had turned her back to him, while Vader had given his speech. Tears continued to silently fall from her eyes. Vader glanced back at Padmé’s form on the bed for a few minutes. Then he called his fallen lightsaber to him, and attached it to his belt before he left the bedroom.

Vader walked into his sitting room and stretched out on one of his couches. For the night, he would leave Padmé alone to deal with her thoughts. He was sure that she would not try to kill him again, but he decided not to push the issue. He would sleep out here tonight and then get up early to make his report with his master. Vader knew that Padmé would continue to be mad at him, as a rebel she did not understand that he was trying to bring peace to the galaxy by ending the rebellion.

Meanwhile, in the bedroom, Padmé rolled over to see that Vader had left. She did not know where he went, and she did not care. He claimed that the Empire was bringing peace to the galaxy. What the Sith failed to see was that before his master destroyed it, the Republic had maintained peace in the galaxy for over a thousand generations. Freedom once reigned where now tyranny consumed the galaxy. Vader did not realize that his master was not bringing peace by hunting down the rebellion, but simply trying to bring himself more control over the people under his rule.

Padmé shuddered at the thought that the Emperor had won a small victory today by destroying the rebels at Dantooine. He had removed one more threat and increased his control over the galaxy. However, she gave a sigh of relief that the rebel leaders were still around to fight another day. Sidious had still not won the war he had started. Padmé smiled at this happier thought as she succumbed to exhaustion and fell asleep.

Ch 14: Breakfast Repairs

Chapter 14: Breakfast Repairs

“Rise, my friend.” The holo image of the Emperor spoke.

Vader rose from his kneeling position on the floor. He had come to the communications room aboard the Executor to give his master his report on Dantooine.

“What news do you have?” Sidious asked.

“I have destroyed a rebel base and all its occupants on the small planet of Dantooine.”

Sidious smiled, “Good, good. And what of the rebel leaders?”

“None were present at the base, but intelligence is continuing its search.”

“Have you had any luck getting any information from your slave?”

Vader stopped himself from flinching as he replied, “No, my master, she remains defiant and refuses to speak. Probing her mind does not work and she will not negotiate either.”

Sidious looked questionably at his apprentice, “Negotiate?”

“I made her watch the attack yesterday. I told her I would spare the rebels if she would give me the names of the leaders, but she refused.”

Sidious cackled. He was not happy that he still did not know who the rebel leaders were, but the thought of Amidala’s horror stricken face as she watched the rebels die made him smile. She needed to feel pain for her treachery against his Empire. Although he was disappointed that Vader’s negotiation had failed, he was pleased with Vader’s cunning. For he knew that if Amidala had given the names, his apprentice would not hesitate in destroying the rebel base before going after the leaders. Lies and deception were the ways of the Sith.

Sidious continued to cackle for a moment before he continued to speak, “Yes, she has always been defiant. It looks like things will not change. However, you should make her watch all of your attacks as punishment.” Sidious cackled again.

“Yes, my master.”

“You have done well, Lord Vader. Take two days leave, and then continue your search of the rebel leaders.”

Vader knelt before the image of Sidious. “Thank you, my master.”

With that final statement, Sidious ended the transmission, and Vader exited the communications room. Vader would be taking the two days leave granted to him by his master aboard his ship since it would take too long to return to Coruscant. However, before he started his leave he needed to talk to his crew.

Vader told his crew that they would all be pulling intelligence duty until they uncovered another rebel base. He told them that until another rebel base was found, they would remain in orbit around Dantooine. Once they found something, the officers were to report to him immediately so that they could get underway in pursuing the rebels.

Many of the higher-ranking officers were unhappy that they would be pulling intelligence duty, but none of them dared to defy Lord Vader. After Padmé's display yesterday, they did not want to anger the Sith Lord anymore. He had not harmed Padmé yesterday, but they did not want to press their luck with the Sith. Someone could be killed if Vader was angered further, so they took on their new tasks without question.

After addressing his crew and insuring that all was well, Vader returned to his quarters. Vader peeked into his bedroom to check on Padmé, but found that she was still asleep. This did not surprise Vader, it was early in the morning, and her lightsaber stunt had kept her up late. Deciding to leave her alone, Vader backed out of the bedroom and went to make himself breakfast.

Padmé awoke five minutes later. As she stretched, she winced at a pain in both of her arms. She looked down at her forearms and saw large bruises where Vader had held her still the previous night. Padmé grimaced at the memory of the events of the previous night as she looked around the room for a sign of Vader. She was relieved that he was not in the room.

Padmé got out of bed and picked out a long sleeved wardrobe. She did not want to give Vader the satisfaction that he had hurt her by letting him see her bruises. Her arms were very sore, so she would have to be careful in her movements so she did not alert Vader.

After choosing her outfit, Padmé walked to the fresher to shower and dress before getting herself some breakfast. The first thing Padmé saw as she entered the kitchen was Vader who appeared to be cooking himself breakfast.

Vader turned at the noise of the kitchen door opening and saw that Padmé was coldly staring back at him. The two were silent for a moment while they stared at each other, neither knowing what to say to the other. Tension mounted as the silence continued. He had stopped himself from hurting her the previous night because her knowledge of the rebel leaders still made her useful. However, if she had fought him any longer he might not have been able to stop himself. He knew why she was angry with him, which helped him restrain himself, but every time she lashed out at him he could feel his control slip. He did not want a repeat performance of the previous night, so he interrupted the silence with a casual question.

"Good morning, are you hungry?" Vader asked as he turned back to finish cooking.

Padmé glared as Vader turned his back on her. He was acting as if nothing had happened the previous night. She might not be trying to kill him at the moment, but she was still furious and would never forgive him. However, she was forced to live with him, and she would not be able to avoid him. Padmé sighed as she replied, "Yes, I came in here to find something to eat."

Vader could feel Padmé's anger, but was pleased that she did not lash out at him. His control would not be tested this morning. "Well, this is almost done." He stated gesturing

towards the meal he was cooking. "If you go pull out something to drink, we could split this." Vader suggested.

"Fine." Padmé agreed with coldness in her tone. She turned to the cooling unit to pull out some juice.

Vader had pulled out two plates and was dividing the meal he had cooked between them when he felt a sense of pain through the Force. Confused, Vader glanced at Padmé who had a grimace on her face as she gingerly pulled out a jug of juice from the cooling unit. "What's wrong?" Vader asked.

"Nothing." Padmé said as she tried to hide the pain in her voice. However, she could not hide the grimace on her face because the muscles in her forearms cried out in pain from the strain of lifting the jug. Vader had badly bruised her last night.

Vader could still feel Padmé's pain, and knew that she was lying. "Do not lie to me, I know that something is wrong, what is it?" Vader said a little more forcibly as he placed the two breakfast plates on the table and used the Force to take the jug from Padmé and place it on the table as well.

"Why should you care? I am only a rebel and now your slave. I should be of no importance to you." Padmé spat out with irritation.

Vader's eyes narrowed at this comment as he took a seat at the table. "I have never treated you as a slave, and you know it. Now tell me, what's wrong."

Padmé remained silent as she sat down at the table as well. She was not going to reveal the bruises on her arms and let Vader know that he had hurt her.

Vader knew that there was something wrong with Padmé's arms because she kept wincing every time she moved them. However he was irritated, that she would not tell him what was wrong. He decided to find out for himself. Using the Force he rolled the sleeves of her outfit up and gasped at the sight of the large bruises on her arms.

"How did you get those?" Vader asked with concern.

Padmé's anger rose when she realized Vader had used the Force to reveal her injuries. "I'm pretty sure you know." She replied angrily.

Vader paused for a moment in confusion before he realized that those bruises were in exactly the same spots he had held her the previous night. He thought he had controlled himself, but apparently his anger had broken free in their argument. He had just been trying to explain to Padmé why he had done what he had done, and that she could not change that matter by killing him. He had not had the intention of hurting her.

"I did not mean to do that." Vader said remorsefully. "If you had not fought me, this might not have happened. He added.

Padmé glared at him, "If you think I'm going to sit around and stay quiet while you kill off rebels, you are mistaken."

"Enough, I did what I had to do." Vader barked at her in irritation. He did not want to hear another speech from her that the Empire was evil. "Give me your arms." He demanded as he placed his own hands palm up on the table. However, Padmé did not move.

“Look, if you want to stay in pain then don’t do what I say, but I can fix it if you will cooperate.” Vader said angrily.

Reluctantly Padmé placed her own hands in Vader’s as she continued to angrily stare back at him. Once he held her hands, he used the Force to heal Padmé’s bruises. In a minute, her pain was gone and she did not wince when she moved her hands away from Vader’s.

Padmé looked down at her arms, and was amazed that the bruises were gone. She looked back up at Vader, her eyes locking with his. “Thank you.” She quietly replied.

“You are welcome.” Vader stated as he turned his gaze from her and to his breakfast.

Ch 15: A Podracing Trick

Chapter 15: A Podracing Trick

For the rest of the morning, Vader and Padmé said very little to one another. After their silent breakfast, Padmé went to locate R2 and Vader retreated to his bedroom. Walking to the room next to the kitchen, Padmé found R2 arguing with C3P0.

“Don’t call me a mindless philosopher you overweight glob of grease! I am programmed to understand humans. If she had wanted your help she would have asked for it.” C3P0 stated with irritation as Padmé opened the door. C3P0 was startled by Padmé’s sudden appearance, and awkwardly softened his tone as he addressed her. “Oh! Miss Padmé, is there something that you need?”

“No 3P0, I just came to find out where R2 was, I had not seen him this morning.”

“Oh! Well, I will be leaving to tend to things elsewhere” C3P0 stated and he exited the room.

“Thank you 3P0.” Padmé stated to his retreating form.

“Beep boop boop beep boop beep boop?” R2 asked.

“I’m fine R2, don’t worry about me. How are you?”

“Boop boop beep beep boop boop beep.” The droid beeped in a tone that hinted at exasperation.

Padmé laughed and then bent down towards the droid and softly whispered, “Well look who built him, no wonder he has problems.”

R2 gave out a series of beeps that sounded like laughter in response. Then he changed his tone to one of concern as he questioned Padmé. “Boop boop beep beep boop?”

“No, I’m fine. He did not hurt me. We just yelled at each other a lot last night.”

“Boop boop boop beep?”

Padmé sighed, “I’m just trying to keep my distance. Stay out of the way for a while.”

“Boop beep beep?”

“No, I will have to face him alone. You go and find something to do.”

“Beep boop beep beep.” R2 stated indignantly.

Padmé laughed, “I know, but at least he’s friendly. Go, I’ll be fine.”

“Boop boop?”

Padmé sighed. As she turned toward the door to leave she replied to R2, “I’ll be careful, I’ll call you if I need you.”

Padmé exited the storage room and R2 followed her. Once in the sitting room, R2 went to join C3P0 in the kitchen while Padmé walked towards the bedroom door. Once she approached the bedroom door she paused and took a deep breath, preparing herself for what lay ahead.

Padmé entered the bedroom and immediately glanced around to locate Vader. She found him sitting on the sofa in front of the holo screen engrossed in a podrace. Vader did not look up when she entered the room, so Padmé walked over to the bookshelf to find something to read. For now she did not want to alert him to her presence. She began to read an old report on Imperial fleet movements to pass the time.

Padmé read in silence, but she was distracted from the report when she heard Vader yell, “Sith!” at the holo screen. Padmé looked up from the report to see Vader shaking his head in frustration at the holo screen. Apparently the podrace was no going well.

Vader’s posture still showed that he was frustrated, but he fell silent, so Padmé returned to reading the report. However, she became distracted again when Vader started cussing again and making comments to the holo screen.

“What are you doing? You are going to get yourself killed.” Vader stated to the screen. “Bank left, you’ll never get around him.” Vader added. Padmé watched as Vader shifted his body left or right in the direction he wanted the podracer to go. She could not stop herself from laughing at Vader as he tried to will the racer on the screen to move.

Vader turned his head at the sound of Padmé’s laughter, annoyed by the distraction from the race, “What is so funny?” he barked at her.

Padmé continued to laugh as she stated, “You.”

Vader quirked an eyebrow as his annoyance grew, “And?”

Padmé rolled her eyes as she continued to snicker, “Does yelling at the screen help?”

Vader narrowed his eyes at Padmé as he replied, “You don’t understand. He’s going to get himself killed.” Then Vader turned back to the screen, “Argh! Why did you do that? You’ll never win!”

Padmé chuckled to herself as she started reading the report again. However, Vader continued to make comments about the podrace making it impossible to concentrate. Sighing she gave up on the report and walked over to the sofa. With Vader’s shouts she would be forced to endure watching the race because he was too distracting for her to do anything else.

“Idiot, bank left!” Vader shouted as he shifted his own body to the left.

Padmé laughed at him as she took a seat on the right side of the sofa as far from him as she could get. “Does moving your body help him?”

Vader looked up at Padmé in disgust, “No!” Vader then turned back to the holo screen and jerked his body right as he shouted, “Right, right! This guy is awful!”

“And you know better?” Padmé asked as she quirked an eyebrow.

Vader turned to her and in an exasperated voice stated, “Yes! I’ve raced pods before, this guy does not know what he is doing?” He returned his gaze to the holo screen.

“You raced pods?”

“Yes, a long time ago.” Vader stated his eyes never leaving the screen.

Padmé glanced at the screen and winced when she saw a racer lose control of his pod and crash into a nearby cliff face. She continued to watch as the racers approached the finish line to cheers from the crowd. “Who won?” She asked Vader.

“What?” Vader asked confused before he realized that Padmé did not know anything about pod racing. “Oh, no one. They just started the final lap. Sebulba is in the lead.”

“Oh. Is that good?”

Vader sighed in annoyance, “No. He cheats.”

“How do you know?”

“He always cheats. Since before the days when I used to race.”

Silence fell between Padmé and Vader as they both continued to watch the race. Vader continued to curse periodically. As she watched, Padmé realized that she had learned some things about Vader’s past during their conversation. Perhaps she could use this race as a distraction to get more information from him.

“Is that Sebulba’s name the crowd is cheering?” Padmé asked.

“Yes, because he is winning.” Vader replied bitterly.

“Did you ever win when you raced?”

“Yes, I was and still am the only human to ever win.” Vader smiled as he continued to watch the race.

“What did the crowds yell when you won?” Padmé asked springing her trap.

“Aaa....” Vader stopped himself from revealing the information as he angrily turned towards Padmé. “That is none of your concern. It is in the past.” He stated coolly as he turned his attention back to the race.

Both Vader and Padmé remained silent through the rest of the race. It seemed that Vader was troubled by his momentary lapse in control when he almost revealed his former name. He did not seem to be as excited about the race. Padmé was incredibly disappointed that her trick had failed. She had almost learned his true identity and she longed to use it against him in retaliation for his attack on Dantooine.

Instead of focusing her attention on the race, Padmé tried to think of other ways to trick Vader into revealing his name. She was so caught up in her own thoughts that she did not notice when the race had ended. In addition, she did not see that Vader had turned off the holo screen and had turned his attention to her.

Vader stared at Padmé for a long moment in silence. He was angry with himself for almost revealing his former name to her. As he continued to dwell on the fact that she had almost tricked him, Vader's anger swelled. Padmé was a nuisance, one who needed to be controlled before she discovered more information than she needed.

Padmé was silent as Vader's eyes bore into her. She was unaware of Vader's changing mood as she continued to contemplate ways to trick Vader into revealing his real name. Caught up in her own thoughts, Padmé jumped in surprise when Vader started yelling at her.

"Why do you keep asking me my name?"

Padmé quickly turned towards Vader once she had composed herself. She noticed his eyes had changed from blue to yellow and realized she had angered him. However, she was not scared of him, and locked her eyes with his as she calmly stated, "Because I want to know."

"I have told you. That name no longer has any meaning for me." Vader growled.

Padmé quirked an eyebrow, "If it is not important why not tell me? What would be the harm?"

Vader growled as he raised his right hand and appeared to be grasping something in thin air. "I will not give you the name, and you will stop asking." He barked at Padmé.

Padmé felt as though an invisible hand was clenched around her throat, cutting off her air supply. She immediately brought her hands up to her neck, and tried to break the mysterious chokehold. When she realized that Vader was using the Force to choke her, she tried to choke out a response to him, but her attempt was incoherent.

Ch 16: The Empire vs The Rebellion

Chapter 16: The Empire vs. The Rebellion

Vader stared at Padmé as her face lost its color due to the lack of oxygen. “You will not ask me my name again!” Vader repeated. He could hear Padmé gasping in response as she tried to force air into her lungs.

Believing he had proven his point, Vader released his Force choke on Padmé. He stood up and watched as she coughed and sputtered as his hold was released. He pointed at her as she raised her angry eyes to him and warned, “Next time, I will not let go.” With that final statement he exited the bedroom and left his quarters.

Once outside his quarters, Vader growled in fury. He had tried to be patient with Padmé and control his anger, but she had made that impossible. Her behavior had forced him to show her his power. Only through his power could he subdue that insufferable rebel.

He needed a moment away from her to compose himself. He decided to go to the bridge and check on his crew’s status in locating the rebels. Once he destroyed the rebellion, he would no longer have any need for Padmé and his master would let him get rid of her. As he walked away from his quarters, he hoped his crew had good news for him.

Padmé rubbed her neck gingerly as she continued to sit on the sofa in Vader’s bedroom. She was furious with Vader for trying to kill her, but she also conceded that she had tried to do the same thing to him the previous night. In addition, she had provoked him. She knew he hated being asked about his name, and she had been pressing him on it since the day they met.

She sighed. She had been very close to learning his name, but based on the argument they had just had, she knew he would be more guarded with that information. Just as Padmé would never disclose the names of the rebel leaders, Vader would never disclose his true name to her. She had to resign herself to the fact that she would never obtain that information and could never use it against him. Padmé would have to come up with new ways to distract Vader from his missions against the rebels.

As Padmé sighed in defeat, the door to the bedroom slid open and both R2D2 and C3P0 came inside.

“Miss Padmé, are you alright? We heard a lot of noise coming from this room.” C3P0 said.

“Boop boop beep boop? R2 interjected with concern.

“I am fine, Lord Vader and I just had another argument. Nothing to worry about, we did not kill each other this time.”

“Boop boop beep?”

“Of course she is sure you bucket of bolts. Why would she not be?” C3P0 replied angrily to R2.

Padmé smiled at C3P0’s comment and then turned to R2 and gently replied, “Yes, I’m fine. Do not worry about me; I can take care of myself. Now why don’t you two go find something to keep yourselves occupied, once Lord Vader returns I will need to speak with him alone.”

“Of course. Come along R2.” C3P0 said as he turned to leave the bedroom. R2D2 reluctantly followed him. Before he exited through the bedroom doorway, R2 turned his domed head towards Padmé who gave him an encouraging smile before he exited.

Once the two droids left, Padmé closed her eyes and reflected on the events of the past few days. If she was going to be of any use to the rebels she needed to find a way to stop Vader and the Emperor. Since she had started living with Vader she had been argumentative and defiant, perhaps she should consider another tact.

As Padmé sat in the bedroom, she recalled the speech Vader had made the previous night when she had tried to kill him. He had given his reasons for working for the Empire. His logic had been fundamentally flawed, and Padmé wondered if using her own logic against him might help her cause.

Thirty minutes after his fight with Padmé, Vader returned to his quarters in a worse mood. His crew had not discovered any leads to finding the rebels. Frustrated by their lack of progress, he had threatened them in hopes of motivating them. However, he doubted this would help in the search.

Vader entered the bedroom to find that Padmé had not moved from the sofa while he was gone. He did not wish to repeat the argument from earlier and tried to slowly back out of the room without her noticing when she called out.

“We need to talk.”

“Why?” Vader growled in irritation.

“Because we have both tried to kill each other. If we do not talk one of us is likely to repeat that. Now you may be a Sith Lord and have no problem with killing, but personally, I would like to avoid being a murderer unless I have a very good reason for it.” Padmé stated calmly.

“What is there to talk about? We will never agree with one another.” Vader barked at her.

“Perhaps. However, we may at least understand the other’s point of view.”

Vader’s eyes changed from their natural blue to sithly yellow as he anticipated Padmé’s questions. He turned to her and asked with a hint of menace, “What do you want to know?”

“Why do you serve the Empire?” Padmé asked calmly as she looked back at Vader.

Vader stared back at Padmé for a moment in silence. He thought that she was going to ask him about his name again. Pleased that she was not restarting their previous argument,

Vader's eyes changed back to blue as he spoke.

"The Empire serves the people of the galaxy. I use my power and abilities to help protect them from the few who wish to disrupt the peace."

"The rebels." Padmé stated as she quirked one of her eyebrows.

"Yes." Vader stated with irritation as he glared at her.

"Do you know what the rebellion is fighting for?"

"Yes, they wish to destroy the Empire and bring back the worthless Republic."

"Why do you think the Republic was worthless?"

"They were too slow to react to the galaxy's needs. The Senate spent more time bickering about an issue rather than taking decisive action to resolve it. Their indecisiveness facilitated unrest in the galaxy."

"I will concede that the Republic was slow, but that was because we were trying to maintain freedom. If laws were passed without debate, the freedom of the galaxy's citizens could have been undermined. Through discussion, the Senate was finding a solution to the galaxy's problems that would not dissolve liberty."

"Freedom still reigns in the Empire. You rebels fail to see it." Vader growled in response. "By providing greater security, citizens are free to live their lives in safety and peace under the Empire's rule."

"Are people free? What would happen if a star system did not approve of one or the Emperor's laws?"

"That is not a problem. No star system in the Empire disapproves of the laws, only the rebellion has a problem." Vader stated with irritation.

"Then if they disapproved they would have the same fate as the rebellion? Then there is no freedom, because people are not free to disobey the Emperor. All those who do not conform to your master's rule would be destroyed." Padmé stated, her tone rising in defiance. "The Republic would have listened to their complaints and tried to find a diplomatic solution."

"The Emperor is not unjust, the laws and changes he has set on the galaxy are for the best of all people."

Padmé's eyes narrowed at Vader's comment as she angrily replied, "That is your opinion, but without freedom, I do not think that the galaxy is better. Sidious is using his position for his own greed and not to protect others."

"This debate is pointless. The Emperor is a good man. He is using his power to help others, just like he once helped me. Without him, I would still be a slave on Tatooine." Vader stated in anger.

Padmé's eyes widened at this last remark. Vader had once been a slave. This explained why he seemed to detest slavery and had made a point of never treating her like one. Padmé was about to make a comment, but Vader's comlink rang and she fell silent so she could eavesdrop on the conversation.

“Yes?” Vader answered the comlink.

Padmé could faintly hear the voice on the other end, “My lord, one of our spies has just contacted us. It has just been discovered that Senator Bail Organa of Alderaan is one of the rebel leaders.”

Padmé’s eyes widened in horror at this announcement as Vader replied, “Good, set our course for Alderaan.”

As Vader ended his transmission Padmé stood up and shouted “No! You can’t do that!”

“I will do what I must.” Vader replied as he walked out of his bedroom and exited his quarters. He was heading to the ship’s main communications room to tell his Master the good news.

Ch 17: Alderaan Lost

Chapter 17: Alderaan Lost

“Rise, my friend. What news do you have?” Sidious asked.

Vader rose from his kneeling position and stated, “Our spies have discovered that Senator Bail Organa is one of the rebel leaders. I have ordered my crew to set our course for Alderaan. We should be there early tomorrow morning.”

Sidious smiled at this revelation. “Good, good. The loss of another leader will further weaken the rebellion.”

“Do you wish me to dispose of Senator Organa?”

Sidious fell silent as he briefly meditated on the question. “No, capture him and bring him before me. He may be more willing than your slave to reveal the remaining rebel leaders.” Sidious cackled with glee.

“Yes, my master.” Vader kneeled with his head bowed before the holo image of Sidious.

“I will expect you in Coruscant the day after tomorrow with your new prisoner. Make your slave watch the capture.”

Vader winced at his master’s last comment, but it went unnoticed since his head was bowed. “As you wish.” He replied as the holo transmission was ended.

As the transmission ended, Sidious cackled softly in his Coruscant throne room. Soon another rebel leader would be captured and his meditations showed that Organa would reveal the names of the remaining leaders with very little persuasion. Soon, the rebel alliance would cease to exist and the Empire would reign supreme.

Sidious smiled as he basked in the glow of his upcoming victory. Rotating his throne on its dais, he looked out a large window and at the dimming sunlight over the Coruscant skyline. As Sidious watched speeders fly past his window he began to cackle manically. “Soon, total control will be mine.” He called out and then paused for a moment. “Tomorrow, I will be the galaxy’s ultimate power.” He finished with greater conviction as his cackles continued to reverberate around the throne room.

Aboard the Executor, Vader was going over battle plans with his crew for the following morning. Procedures needed to be in place to ensure the successful capture of Organa. He needed to brief his crew so that there would be no problems. However, Vader did not foresee any. They would be arriving in Alderaan early in the morning and would easily be able to sneak planet side undetected to capture the traitorous Senator.

Vader talked into the night, detailing the tasks for the next day. With four hours remaining until their arrival at Alderaan, Vader dismissed his crew to get some rest. Vader himself returned to his quarters to rest before the morning's events. As he entered his bedroom, he glanced at the sofa and found that Padmé was asleep. Vader smiled, he would be able to get some sleep without a fight.

Padmé shifted slightly in her sleep, and Vader watched her hoping she would not awaken. He sighed with relief when she continued to sleep. However, with her new position he could see her puffy eyes and tear stained cheeks. She had cried herself asleep while he had been gone.

Vader shook his head as he changed into his sleepwear. Padmé did not understand that her rebel friends were destabilizing the galaxy. The failed Republic could not protect the galaxy like the Empire could. As Vader crept into bed for some much needed rest, he knew that Padmé would be unhappy with the mornings events, but she would just have to learn to deal with it. He would not let the Empire be torn apart. His mother had died because he had failed to protect her, and he would not break his vow that he would protect others from her fate.

An hour before the Executor would be exiting hyperspace over Alderaan, Vader awakened from his nap. He quickly gathered his clothing and went to the fresher to clean himself up. He emerged 15 minutes later fully clothed and ready to fulfill his mission. He would need to go to the bridge to oversee operations and based on his master's orders he would have to take Padmé with him.

Padmé was still asleep and Vader was delaying the moment when he would have to wake her. Things were peaceful and quiet right now, but he knew that once she was up that would all change. Time ticked away as Vader stared at Padmé's sleeping form basking in the temporary quiet. Frustrated that his peace would be ended, Vader sighed as he walked over to Padmé and gently shook her awake.

Padmé's eyes opened and locked onto Vader's. Her eyes narrowed as he stared down on her and spoke, "Get up and get dressed. We are heading to the bridge immediately. Breakfast can wait."

"I am not going! I will not watch you slaughter innocents." Padmé angrily replied.

Vader ignored Padmé's anger as he stated, "You will be happy to know that the Emperor has decreed that your friend Organa is to be captured and brought before him. No killing will occur today." He turned from Padmé and walked towards the bedroom door. Before exiting he called back, "You will accompany me to the bridge in five minutes even if you are not ready. I suggest you get dressed."

Padmé glowered as the bedroom door closed, leaving her alone in the room. She wanted to remain where she was and defy Vader, but she also knew that he would drag her to the bridge if he had to. Padmé sighed as she walked to the closet and started pulling out clothes. If she was going to be forced to watch Vader's atrocities she would dress with dignity in honor of her rebel friends.

Five minutes later, Padmé emerged from the bedroom. Vader was waiting for her in the sitting room. Vader smiled as she walked up to him, pleased that she had complied with his request. She had dressed herself in a white skintight jumpsuit with a matching, long wool cape draped over her shoulders. Vader gazed at her petite form and realized that she had dressed herself for battle. He hoped that she would not create a scene on the bridge.

“I’m glad you decided to follow my orders. Now follow me.” Vader stated coolly as he walked out of his quarters and led Padmé to the bridge.

Once Vader and Padmé both reached the bridge there was five minutes before the Executor would be exiting hyperspace. They both stood in the middle of the bridge. Vader barked last minute orders at the crew, while Padmé stared out the large view port waiting for a glimpse of Alderaan.

Vader noticed Padmé’s tense posture, but since she was silent he decided to leave her alone. Instead, he busied himself with informing his crew to fall into orbit around Alderaan once they left hyperspace.

A few minutes later, the planet of Alderaan was in view. The plan was to take a shuttle down and capture the Senator. The Empire’s plans should have been unsuspected so this task should have been fairly simple. However as Vader glanced out at the planet, he saw a small white ship moving away from it.

“Lieutenant!” Vader barked. “Find out what that ship’s cargo and destination is. Be prepared to use our tractor beam to capture it.” Unnoticed to Vader and the rest of the crew, Padmé smiled at the sight of the ship.

“Please identify yourself.” The lieutenant stated as he opened a channel of communication with the unknown ship.

“This is the Tantive IV, a consular ship.” Responded a voice over the channel.

“What is your destination?”

There was no response from the ship, so the lieutenant asked his question again, “I repeat, what is your destination.”

There was a pause and then the voice of Senator Bail Organa came over the channel, “I’m afraid I cannot give you that information. Lord Vader, you will have to do better than this to capture me.”

“Initiate tractor beam!” Vader roared as his eyes turned yellow.

Padmé continued to watch the Tantive with nervous apprehension as Vader’s crew hurriedly started the tractor beam. However before it could get a hold of it, the Tantive IV had sprung into hyperspace.

Padmé cheered in relief as her friend escaped from Vader. Meanwhile Vader roared at his crew. “Track them! We must find them!”

Ch 18: The Apprentice's Failure

Chapter 18: The Apprentice's Failure

Unfortunately, Vader's crew could find no trace of the Tantive IV as it was impossible to trace where the ship went upon entering hyperspace. When Vader returned to Coruscant, he would be confronting his master empty handed. The Executor's course had been set for Coruscant, but Vader had ordered his crew to locate Organa's whereabouts. Vader hoped that he would at least have some information to provide his master when he arrived on Coruscant the next day. He was unsure of his master's reaction, because Vader had never failed him before.

Padmé did not help Vader feel any better. She spent the entire time on the bridge laughing and crying for joy. She continued her antics in Vader's quarters while he paced around the bedroom.

Padmé was overjoyed by her friend's clever escape. She was sitting on the sofa in Vader's bedroom, and smiled as she witnessed his obvious agitation.

"Nervous?" Padmé asked him.

Vader stopped his pacing and turned toward her. "No," he replied before continuing his pacing.

Padmé smiled. "I'm sure your master will be disappointed by today's events."

Vader stopped pacing again. His back was to Padmé and she watched his shoulders stiffen as he replied, "These things happen, he will understand."

Padmé continued to smile as Vader resumed his pacing.

Vader and Padmé did not say anything else to each other for the rest of the day. Padmé chuckled as Vader left his quarters periodically to see if Organa had been found. That night, she fell asleep on the couch in his bedroom with a smile on her face. Vader did not sleep, but spent the night in quiet meditation to prepare for his meeting in the morning.

Morning came and the Executor arrived in orbit over Coruscant. Vader left Padmé in the bedroom, who was sound asleep, still with a smile on her face. He was sure that the Emperor would send him back to the Executor after this meeting, so there was no point for her to accompany him down to the planet's surface.

Vader took his personal shuttle to a landing platform near the Imperial palace. Before exiting his shuttle, he squared his shoulders and took a deep breath to calm himself. Once he was prepared, he exited the shuttle and walked up the long steps leading to the palace doors.

Once inside the palace he took a turbolift to the top floor and slowly knocked on the heavy doors of the throne room.

The heavy doors opened by themselves and Sidious's voice called out, "Enter."

Vader entered the chambers and walked towards a dais on the opposite side of the room. Upon the dais was the Emperor's throne, which was currently facing the large windows overlooking the planet's surface. As Vader came closer to the dais he heard the large doors close behind him. As the throne slowly turned to face him, Vader kneeled and bowed his head in deference to his master.

"Welcome home Lord Vader." Sidious greeted him once his throne was facing his apprentice. He was surprised to see that Vader was alone; he had suspected that he would have brought the traitorous Senator Organa with him. "Where is your prisoner?" he asked.

Vader remained silent for a moment before he answered, "He escaped my master, he was on his ship when I arrived at Alderaan and jumped into hyperspace before the tractor beam could capture him."

Sidious's eyes narrowed as his anger grew. His apprentice had failed to capture the man that could ensure his ultimate control and power over the galaxy. Sidious stood from his throne, and as he walked towards his apprentice he spoke with menace, "You let him escape?"

Vader could feel his master's anger, but kept his head bowed, as he replied, "No, my master. I tried to capture him; Organa must have been alerted to our upcoming arrival. My crew and myself have been searching for him. We will find him again."

Sidious was now standing in front of Vader and used his hand to tilt Vader's chin up. As Vader looked into his master's yellow eyes he said, "I promise you Master, I will not fail again."

Vader felt a brush of the Force against his mind as his master replied, "Indeed, you will not." Then suddenly, Vader was Force flung to the opposite wall just left of the doorway he had entered earlier. As Vader hit the wall, chains encircled his arms and legs, preventing him from moving. Vader tried to fight the bonds, but could not break them. He then tried to use the Force to help him, but that did not work either. He continued to struggle against the bonds, but looked up at the sound of Sidious's cackle.

Sidious was walking towards Vader's bound form as he spoke, "You can quit struggling my apprentice, I have temporarily blocked your Force abilities. You will regain it in time, but you must learn a lesson about failure."

Vader tried to hide his growing fear from his face as he stared up into his master's eyes and spoke, "Master I..."

Sidious interrupted him by sending a surge of Force lightning through Vader's body, "You had the opportunity to end the rebellion, but you let Organa get away."

Vader's body convulsed from the after effects of the lightning as he tried to respond, "Yes, but..."

“Silence!” Sidious barked as he sent another surge of Force lightning towards Vader. “I do not want to hear your excuses. I would have total control over the galaxy if it had not been for you. Failure is not acceptable, let me remind you what can happen when you fail.” Sidious used the Force and brushed against Vader’s mind again.

Vader had been trying to compose himself as his master spoke. However, images started flooding his mind which caused him to struggle against his bonds as he screamed out, “Nooooooooo!” Sidious had brought forth memories that Vader had tried to bury in his mind. He could see his mother being beaten by Tusken Raiders while he was helpless to stop them. As Vader watched the memory of the Raiders dragging his mother from their hovel, he shouted, ‘Stop, stop! Nooooooooo!’ Then the memory changed and Vader saw a group of dead Tusken Raiders, surrounding the lifeless body of his mother. Vader screamed in agony, “Nooooooooooooo! Stop! I promise I won’t fail again!” Suddenly, the memories faded and Vader’s body slumped helplessly against his chains as Sidious cackled.

“I am sure you won’t, my young apprentice. However, I want to make sure you do not forget this lesson.” He stated as Vader screamed again.

Vader felt a sharp pain across his chest and upper arms. Nothing had struck him, and he realized his master was using the Force again. Sidious was using the Force to whip Vader to remind him what can happen when one fails. Vader screamed with every lash of the invisible whip. After nearly fifteen minutes of torture, Vader’s bonds were released and he fell helplessly to the ground.

Sidious smiled at Vader’s fallen form and said, “Now go my apprentice, and do not fail me again.”

Vader gingerly picked himself up and painfully replied, “Yes, my master.”

Ch 19: Healing

Chapter 19: Healing

Vader staggered back to his shuttle and collapsed in the pilot's chair. He winced and grimaced as every movement hurt. He tried to call upon the Force to heal his wounds, but he found that his ability was still blocked.

Vader knew that his master would be displeased that Organa had escaped, but he had not been prepared for his punishment. Vader closed his eyes and put his face in his hands as he tried to block out the memories he had been forced to recall. Sidious was right; failure could lead to terrible things, like the events that had killed his mother.

The rebellion could have been stopped if he had successfully captured Senator Organa yesterday. The people of the Empire would be safe, or would they? Vader recalled part of Sidious's speech from earlier; "I would have total control over the galaxy if it had not been for you."

He had always thought that Sidious was a good man who wished to serve the galaxy, but this statement sounded like he lusted for power. Vader sat in quiet contemplation for a moment while he mulled this over. Then Vader shook his head, no his master was a good man. If Sidious were heartless he would have never saved him from life as a slave. His master's previous display was just to help remind Vader the importance of his work.

With this last thought, Vader fired up the engines of his shuttle, and headed back to the Executor.

Back in his throne room, Sidious seethed in anger. The power he had longed for had been denied him from his apprentice's failure. He would have to wait longer for the control he craved.

Sidious walked back to his throne and turned it towards the windows. Sitting in his chair, he could just make out the outline of his apprentice's shuttle heading back to the Executor. He smiled at the sight.

His apprentice would not forget this lesson quickly, for Sidious's Force block would not wear off for quite a few hours. His apprentice would not fail him again after the punishment he received. The memories of the past would influence his apprentice to work harder and drive him to relentlessly pursue the rebellion. Sidious cackled as he whispered, "Soon the galaxy will be mine."

Vader landed his shuttle in the Executor's docking bay. He grimaced as he stood up from his chair and swayed slightly from pain in exhaustion. The lack of sleep from the previous

night had caught up with him and he was further drained from his wounds. His tunic was sticking to him, and he suspected that some of the wounds on his chest were bleeding.

Vader steadied himself since he did not want to show weakness to his crew. He exited his shuttle and carefully walked down the exit ramp. At the bottom of the ramp, Vader's admiral greeted him.

"Welcome back, my lord. What are our orders?"

"Go back to Alderaan and continue your search for Senator Organa and the rebels." Vader said as he tried to hide the pain in his voice.

The admiral did not seem to notice Vader's discomfort because he bowed as he said, "As you wish my lord."

After the admiral had left, Vader walked back to his quarters for some much needed rest.

Padmé had awoken earlier in the morning to find that Vader was not around. The ship must have reached Coruscant and he was meeting with the Emperor. As she ate breakfast, she wondered how Sidious was taking the news of Organa's escape. She smiled at the Emperor's failure to stop the rebellion.

After her breakfast, Padmé helped R2 and C3P0 clean up the kitchen. Once that task was completed she decided to go back to the bedroom and wait for Vader's return. She could not wait to revel in his failure some more.

As Padmé stepped into the sitting room, she heard the front door open. Smiling she turned towards the sound as she watched Vader walk into the room. She started to say something to him, but stopped herself.

Her smile faded as she got a closer look at him. Vader looked pale and the front of his dark tunic was damp with what she suspected was blood. She watched, as Vader seemed to take no notice of her and staggered towards his bedroom. Padmé had been furious with Vader's actions against her rebel friends, but now that she could see what his Master had done to him, she felt sorry for him.

Padmé followed Vader into the bedroom, and felt pity for him as he collapsed on his bed and groaned in pain. Padmé had wanted Sidious to be angered by Organa's escape, but she had never expected him to lash out violently to his apprentice.

Vader groaned in pain again as he tried to make himself comfortable. Padmé remained silent as she watched her enemy and captor struggle through his pain. As a rebel she should have let the Sith Lord suffer. However, she was horrified that Sidious would cause his apprentice such pain, and her compassionate nature drew her to Vader's side.

Padmé carefully approached the bed and sat down next to Vader. He did not move or acknowledge her presence. Padmé could clearly see a dark stain on Vader's tunic. She slowly started unbuttoning his tunic to get a closer look, but he put his hands over hers to stop her.

Padmé sighed as she replied, “Look, quit fighting and let me see. I’m trying to help.”

Vader grimaced as he replied, “I don’t need your help.”

Padmé rolled her eyes as she responded, “Really? Well, if you don’t let me help, I’ll start asking you about your name. I’m pretty sure you are too weak to hurt me today.”

Vader groaned in response, but released Padmé’s hands. She quickly unbuttoned the rest of his tunic and gasped as she opened it up. Large gashes from a whip were cut into Vader’s chest, which were oozing blood. It also appeared that there were some on his upper arms as well. She would need to remove his tunic to be sure.

“I’m going to need your help, you have a lot of open wounds and I think your tunic is covering some of them. I need you to remove it so that I can see them.” Padmé stated.

Vader did not say anything, but gritted his teeth and sat up in bed. He then carefully removed his tunic. With every movement, Vader tried to stifle his moans of pain. With a grimace he finally removed the tunic, and threw it on the floor before collapsing back on the bed.

Padmé’s suspicions had been confirmed, Vader had wounds on his chest and his upper arms. She quickly walked to the fresher and grabbed some supplies to clean and dress Vader’s wounds before returning to his side.

“How could you serve someone who does such things to you? Padmé asked as she poured some antiseptic to a cloth.

She started to dab his wounds with the cloth. The antiseptic burned and Vader hissed in pain. However, he gave no response to her question.

“You do not deserve to be treated like this.” Padmé continued.

Vader remained quiet as Padmé cleaned his wounds. He could not believe that the woman who had been making his life miserable was now tending to him. She was an enemy and a rebel and should not be showing him such kindness. His master had punished him to remind him what failure can cause. She should be thrilled by his injuries, but instead she was healing them.

Vader gazed at Padmé’s face as she started to apply bandages to his wounds. He had always considered rebels to be monsters. He thought they did not care about anyone but their cause as they fought the Empire, but here was one that was tending to the wounds of her enemy. Her compassion created a feeling of trust within Vader, and as Padmé continued to apply bandages he softly whispered to her, “Anakin.”

“What?” Padmé said as she finished applying the last bandage.

Winching, Vader sat up and locked his blue eyes on Padmé’s. Through gritted teeth he replied, “My name is Anakin Skywalker.” Then succumbing to his pain and exhaustion he slumped back onto the bed and fell asleep.

Ch 20: A Sith Lord's Thanks

Chapter 20: A Sith Lord's Thanks

Padmé gasped. She thought she would never learn his real name, and he had finally revealed it to her himself. Smiling, she gazed back at his sleeping form and whispered, “Anakin.” Anakin did not move, but a smile crept onto his face in response to her voice. Padmé continued to smile at his reaction, and mused that he looked peaceful in his sleep.

As Padmé continued to gaze at Anakin, she wondered what had happened to make him a Sith. How had Sidious convinced him to forget his past and take up the persona of Darth Vader? Perhaps now that he had given her his name, he would answer these new questions as well.

Padmé decided to let Anakin rest and leave him in peace. She stood up from the bed and started to walk away. However, she had only moved a few feet from the bed when she heard Anakin moan in pain. She quickly walked back to the bed to check on him and see what was wrong, but his moans stopped as she approached the bed.

Padmé stayed by his side for a few moments to make sure he was fine before she walked away again. However just as before, as she moved further away from the bed Anakin’s moans continued. Padmé went back to the bed and checked on him again, but his moans stopped and everything seemed to be fine. Padmé tried to leave Anakin’s side several times, but was called back every time by his moans.

Padmé sighed as she sat herself down on the floor next to Anakin’s bed. When he was Vader she could have listened to him be in pain, but now that he was Anakin she could not stand the sound. Since he was quiet when she was near, Padmé decided to sit next to the bed until he woke up.

Hours past by, and Padmé spent her time mulling over her own thoughts, or silently gazing at Anakin. Later in the day, R2 brought her some food and picked out some reading material from one of the bookshelves for her. Anakin slept the whole day, while Padmé silently read next to him. However, after finishing her evening meal that C3P0 had brought her she grew bored of reading. With nothing else to do, Padmé leaned up against the bed and soon fell asleep.

Anakin awoke late in the evening and winced at the pain in his chest and arms. He looked down and noticed that some of his wounds had bled through his bandages. However, his master’s Force block had lifted, so instead of replacing the bandages, he used the Force to heal his wounds completely.

His wounds were no longer visible as he sat up and removed the sodden bandages from his body. The only indications that he had been injured were blotches of dried blood across his chest and forearms. He decided to take a shower before continuing his rest.

Not paying attention to what he was doing, Anakin almost stepped on Padmé as he rose from his bed. He glanced down at her sleeping form and was amazed that she had stayed by his side while he slept. His feelings of trust grew at this sight.

Noting that she was probably uncomfortable in her current position, Anakin temporarily discarded his bandages on the floor. Then he carefully picked up Padmé and laid her out on the bed for her to continue her slumber.

Anakin's eyes remained fixed on Padmé's sleeping form for a moment before he picked up his bandages. He then went to the fresher to discard them and clean himself up, but he stole one last glance at Padmé before he entered. He mused that she had truly been an angel today.

After taking his shower, Anakin had changed into a pair of his black sleep pants. He was still quite tired from the previous day regardless of the fact that he had already slept for most of the day.

Yawning as he stretched his arms, Anakin walked back over to the bed to continue his rest. However, he had forgotten that he had placed Padmé on the bed earlier. It was not until he had reached the bed, and gazed down at her slumbering form that he remembered that she was there.

Padmé looked peaceful in her sleep. Her curly brown hair was fanned out across one of the pillows and Anakin noted that it framed her face well and showed off her natural beauty. After the kindness that she had showed him, he did not have the heart to wake her. Instead, he knelt down on the floor beside the bed, gently lifted Padmé's right hand and brought it to his lips. He lightly kissed the back of it and whispered, "Thank you" before he stood up to leave the bedside.

Anakin had just turned away from Padmé and was about to walk away, when a soft, sleepy voice called out to him. "You are welcome, but what are you doing out of bed?"

Anakin rolled his eyes, and with his back still to her he responded, "I did not want to disturb you."

Padmé was slightly taken aback by Anakin's courteousness. As Darth Vader, he had shown some kindness to her, but these moments never ceased to surprise her. "You should not be out of bed. Your wounds will not heal if you do not rest." She replied casually.

Anakin turned towards her, "I am healed."

Padmé gasped as she saw that there was no trace of the gaping wounds she had bandaged earlier.

Anakin sat on the bed next to her and replied to her unspoken question, "My Force abilities have returned, so I was able to heal myself. However..." He gently grabbed Padmé's hand and brought it to his lips again as he continued, "...thank you for your kindness."

Padmé and Anakin's eyes locked on one another's, as he lightly kissed her hand again. Padmé placed her other hand on his shoulder, and lightly traced the places where Anakin's wounds had been as if to ensure that they were truly healed. "How can you let him treat you like that?" She asked as Anakin released her other hand.

“I deserved it. I have failed him, and failure is not acceptable.” He replied with a yawn.

“No one deserves to be treated like that, no matter what they have done wrong.”

Anakin fell silent as he continued to stare into Padmé’s eyes.

“Anakin, why do you follow him? What happened long ago to make you follow him?”

Anakin’s gaze fell to Padmé’s lips as his name fell from them. It was a beautiful sound coming from her and his heart fluttered as she uttered it.

“Anakin?” Padmé called out again trying to end his musings.

Anakin sighed in response and dropped his gaze from her as he responded, “I don’t want to talk about that. I just want to get some sleep.” He locked his gaze back onto Padmé’s eyes as he finished.

“But Anakin...” Padmé tried to reply, but she was cutoff when Anakin moved in and kissed her passionately. She pressed her palms against his chest as if she wanted to push him away, but he held her firmly to him. Soon she wrapped her arms around him and closed her eyes as she gave into his kiss.

The kiss continued for a moment until Padmé realized that she was kissing her enemy. Her eyes snapped open as a look of horror crossed her face. What was she doing? He was a Sith Lord and she was a rebel. She certainly was not supposed to be kissing him.

Padmé quickly moved her hands down Anakin’s chest and pushed him away with all of her might. As their kiss abruptly broke, her horror stricken gaze locked onto Anakin’s shocked blue orbs.

Silence permeated the room until Padmé breathlessly said, “I.... I shouldn’t have done that.” Then she quickly ran from the bed, exited the bedroom, and retreated to the sitting room outside.

For his part, Anakin continued to sit on the bed staring at Padmé’s retreating form. As the door to the bedroom closed his eyes briefly flashed yellow. With a growl, he grabbed a nearby pillow and angrily threw it at the closed door.

Ch 21: Confused Emotions

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Anakin stood up from the bed and angrily paced back and forth across his bedroom. He did not know what had come over him. He was Darth Vader, Dark Lord of the Sith, and Sith Lords did not kiss rebel leaders.

Vader gave a frustrated growl as he continued to pace. Kissing the enemy was certainly not going to help him stop the rebellion, no matter how good her lips tasted. Vader paused at this last thought. He could not seem to get Padmé out of his head.

In the few hours since his master's punishment, she had shown him a great kindness. In return he had revealed his name and kissed her. In his mind, he could still see the image of her beautiful body next to his, as he enjoyed the feel of her lips against his.

Vader shook his head to clear the image and continued his pacing. It sounded to him like he was in love, but that was not possible. Sith Lords did not fall in love, it was forbidden. Besides, she argued and fought with him too much for him to possibly be in love. However, Vader mused as he stopped his pacing again, the feel of her in his arms had felt right. It had seemed that she was meant to be within his embrace.

Vader gave an agitated sigh as he continued to pace again. He could not believe he was having these thoughts. He needed a solution to this problem. He had to quit thinking of her this way; after all she was a rebel and his enemy.

Padmé ran from the bedroom and collapsed on the closest sofa in the sitting room. She could not believe that she had kissed Darth Vader. Worst of all, she had enjoyed it. She brought her fingertips to her lips, which still tingled from the kiss. She closed her eyes and could still sense the comfort she had felt when Anakin held her in his arms.

Padmé gave a frustrated groan at this thought and placed her face in her hands. Ever since he returned from his meeting with Sidious, Padmé had shown great compassion for the Sith Lord. Then after he had revealed his name, her feelings had inexplicably grown. A part of her burned for the touch of Anakin Skywalker.

However, he was not just Anakin Skywalker, he was also Darth Vader, Dark Lord of the Sith. Vader was her enemy and he did not warrant or deserve her feelings of pity or compassion. She could not and would not betray the rebel cause by falling in love with a Sith Lord.

Padmé's head shot up at the last thought. Love? Did she love Darth Vader? A look of horror crossed her face as her lips continued to tingle with the lingering memory of their previous kiss. An image of her fingers running across Anakin's sculpted chest flashed before her eyes as she stared blankly into space.

She shook her head to clear this thought when realization hit her. She did not love Darth Vader. He had killed rebels, helped to destroy the Republic, and most importantly he was a Sith Lord. She could never love a monster like that. However, she also conceded that she was falling in love with Anakin Skywalker. A handsome young man who it seemed had tragically been led astray. Unfortunately for Padmé, Darth Vader and Anakin Skywalker were the same person. If she loved one of them, then she had to love the other.

Since she had been enslaved to Darth Vader, she had always wanted to know his original name. Now that she knew it, she wanted to forget it. That name sparked conflicting emotions within her, emotions she knew that she should not feel. She would need to distance herself from him so that she could reign in and control her feelings.

Padmé sighed in exasperated frustration. She was locked away in Vader's quarters, and although there were multiple rooms, it would be impossible to avoid him completely. With no means of escape, she had to think of another way to create distance between them.

Padmé sat silently for a long while in quiet reflection of her problem. Slowly, a solution formed in her mind. Her compassionate nature had drawn her to develop strong feelings for Anakin Skywalker. At the same time, her love for democracy, freedom, and justice had forced her to loathe Darth Vader. She realized that to prevent herself from falling in love, she had to continually associate Anakin with Vader.

From this day forward, she decided to never say the name Anakin Skywalker again. If she ever addressed him, he would always be Darth Vader. This would prevent any other conflicting emotions, because she would never love her enemy.

Darth Vader had quit his pacing, and had decided to meditate. Perhaps reflection would help him resolve his feelings for Padmé. However, after calling upon the Force for five minutes, he stopped, placed his face in his hands and sighed in frustration.

He did not have a solution for his feelings. His meditations had left him with a sense of yearning and longing as various images of Padmé flashed in his mind. Even the Force was not letting him escape his feelings.

As Vader stood up to resume his pacing, he stretched out with his feelings and could sense Padmé's presence in the nearby sitting room. Through the Force, he could feel that she was weary, troubled, and exhausted just like him. Then realizing what he was doing, Vader quit using the Force to sense her. He was showing way too much concern for her, and that was not the way of the Sith.

He realized that he needed to get away from her and busy himself with something else for a while. He decided to go to the bridge and supervise his crew in the search for Senator Organa. With this action plan, Vader quickly got dressed and exited his bedroom.

Once he was in the sitting room, he glanced around for a sign of Padmé. He found her slumped over on a couch, asleep. Tension etched her beautiful face and Vader realized that she had worn herself out with her own troubled thoughts. He felt better since he obviously was not the only one who was suffering from the aftermath of their kiss.

Vader turned to walk out of his quarters, when he heard Padmé faintly call out, "Anakin."

Vader turned around as he replied, "Yes?" However, as he glanced at her, he realized she was still asleep.

He was about to turn to leave again, but stopped as she spoke again, "Anakin, please."

"Please what?" Vader asked, perplexed at what Padmé could be dreaming about.

"Help." Padmé said as she continued to dream.

"Help with what?" Vader asked trying to coax her to reveal more about her dream. However, Padmé remained silent. He tried to use the Force to learn more about this dream, but Padmé's strong mind blocked it from his view.

Vader sighed as he gave up on his probing. Her dream seemed to have ended because she remained silent. With one last glance at her, Vader turned on his heel and walked out of his quarters.

As Vader left, Padmé's dream continued and as the door slid closed, she softly whispered, "Stop him."

Ch 22: Rebel Treachery

Chapter 22: Rebel Treachery

Vader strolled down one of the hallways of the Executor on his way to the bridge. As he walked he pondered what he had just heard from Padmé. She had asked for his help in something, but he did not know what that was. As he neared the bridge, he recalled that she had called him Anakin, and his heart swelled at the thought. However, he realized that his thoughts had drifted back to her and he tried to clear his head as he walked onto the bridge.

“What is the status of your search?” Vader asked his admiral. For some reason, Vader felt reluctant to hear the news.

“We have had no leads in locating the Tantive IV, my lord. It is impossible to know where it went upon entering hyperspace. We are currently scanning communications channels and scouring intelligence reports for any idea as to where they went.” The admiral replied.

“Very well, continue your search and bring me the latest intelligence report.” Vader replied.

“As you wish, my lord.” The admiral said as he bowed to Vader and left his side.

Vader walked to a nearby view port and gazed out at the stars around him. He had to find the rebels, the fate of the Empire stood in the balance. He could not fail his master again. However, Vader also knew that if he found the rebels and destroyed them, Padmé would never forgive him and he felt a great deal of sadness at this prospect.

Vader closed his eyes and exhaled a deep breath. The kiss with Padmé was haunting his thoughts and taking his mind off the mission. He should not be concerned with how she would feel once he finds the rebels. She was a traitor for supporting them.

Vader’s musings were interrupted when his admiral returned to his side and handed him a stack of papers, “Here are the intelligence reports you requested, my lord.”

“Very good Admiral, continue your search and contact me immediately if you find anything.” Vader stated. With this last statement, he took the reports and left the bridge to find a quiet place to review them.

Vader entered the vacant strategy room and spread the intelligence report across a table. He then sat in a nearby chair. As he settled in to begin reading the report, he propped his legs up on top of the table and leaned back in his chair.

He read that the rebels had been cutting off Imperial supply lines to various Imperial posts. However, there was not a set pattern, so he could not determine where the rebels were launching these attacks. This news angered Vader because these supply lines did not just service Imperial troops, but also provided goods to planetary systems within the Empire. He

could not understand why rebels, like Padmé, could not see that their actions were hurting innocent civilians.

Vader sighed as his thoughts strayed back to Padmé. She claimed that the rebels were trying to save the galaxy from tyranny. She had told him that the Emperor was only interested in power, but Vader knew that she was blinded by her rebel ideals.

When he looked at the Emperor, he saw a visionary who cared greatly about the galaxy. He cared so much about people that he had saved a young slave boy from a harsh life on Tatooine. In addition, he had worked to change the government structure from a bureaucratic Republic, to a well-organized Empire. Unlike the Republic, the Empire was bringing peace to the galaxy in order to maintain the freedom of citizens. Vader could not understand why Padmé could not see that.

The Emperor was not power hungry; he was looking out for the best interest of the galaxy. Or was he? Vader's memory traveled back to the day he had been punished. When his master had heard that Vader had failed in capturing Senator Organa, he had angrily claimed, "I would have total control over the galaxy if it had not been for you."

This statement seemed to align with Padmé's logic, but Vader would not believe it. His master was just angry at Vader's failure to end the rebellion. That statement had no real meaning, it had been said in anger, Vader mused. However, then Vader recalled a previous conversation with Padmé.

"Why did you not want a slave?" Padmé had asked.

"Because I do not need one." Vader had responded.

"Yes, you said that, but your Master has slaves and he does not need them. So what is your problem with them?"

"The Emperor is a busy man, I am sure he has uses for his slaves."

"Like you?" Padmé had questioned.

In response to this memory, Vader slammed his fist down on the table and a large crack formed on the surface. As his eyes turned yellow, Vader roared in anger, "I am not a slave!"

Vader stood up from his chair and started pacing with his hands behind his back. He had chosen to serve the Emperor in his cause to bring peace to the galaxy. He was not being forced to do anything, but as Vader thought this, another of Padmé's statements came to mind.

"And what would happen if you chose to disobey him?"

Vader paused his pacing and involuntarily shivered. He had been punished for failure; he hated the prospect of what would happen if he disobeyed his master. Vader stood silent in quiet contemplation of this thought for a moment. Then Vader realized that he was letting the comments of a traitorous rebel get to him. He would never disobey his master, the person who had saved him from a life in bondage. Vader realized that Padmé had been trying to turn him against his master since day one.

Unfortunately for her, she had failed. That whole kiss must have been concocted by her as a last ditch effort to turn him. Vader seethed in anger as he imagined Padmé plotting against

him. As his anger grew, his memories of that kiss warped, and now instead of him drawing her into his arms, all he could see was a rebel seductress trying to charm him with her beauty.

As Vader's rage grew from this perceived deception, he Force flung chairs from around the cracked table and crashed them into nearby walls. Soon all that was left in the room was the cracked table, Vader's chair, and a pile of debris from Vader's Force tantrum.

Vader turned back to the table, his yellow eyes looked down at his rebel report. Padmé would not turn him against his master, and she would learn her place. He sat back in his chair and determinedly read through the intelligence report, looking for clues to the rebels' whereabouts. They would pay for their leader's treachery.

Ch 23: No Longer Useful

Chapter 23: No Longer Useful

Vader returned to his quarters late in the morning. He seethed in frustrated anger, because he could not decipher the rebels whereabouts from the intelligence reports. He went to get something to eat before he attempted to question Padmé about them again. However, as he stepped into the doorway of the kitchen, he ran into a small figure.

Padmé had awoken from a restless sleep and went to get herself some breakfast. She had suffered from nightmares, but she could not recall what they were about. All during breakfast she had tried to remember her dreams. Her musings continued as she walked out of the kitchen after breakfast. She was so caught up in her own thoughts that she ran into Vader as she tried to exit the kitchen.

She glanced up at him momentarily before dropping her gaze to the floor and took a step back to let him through. However, Vader did not move and remained standing in the doorway.

Padmé looked up into his face, and was met by the cold stare of a pair of yellow eyes. Vader's eyes seemed to bore right through her as silence filled the kitchen. Padmé could tell that the Sith Lord was angry, but was not sure what was the problem.

"Is there something you want, Lord Vader?" Padmé asked calmly.

The yellow in Vader's eyes intensified as he snarled, "Yes! You can tell me where your rebel friends are now!"

Padmé's eyes narrowed and she shouted, "No, never!"

"Tell me!" Vader roared.

Maintaining her defiance, Padmé said, "No!"

Vader clenched the fist of his human hand and growled in frustration. Then taking a deep breath, he looked into Padmé's eyes and spoke. "I see through your lies, you traitorous rebel. You have been trying to turn me against my master since the day I met you. That is why you kissed me. It was a last ditch effort to complete your mission."

Padmé balked at Vader's accusation, "I kissed you!" Padmé shouted. "If I'm not mistaken, it was you who kissed me, you arrogant Sith!"

"Don't try to deny it, I can see past your rebel lies. Now tell me where the rebels are!" Vader barked.

"I don't know where you get your delusions, but if you think I'm going to betray my friends you are much mistaken." Padmé replied.

"Tell me now, or you are of no further use to me!"

"Why would I want to be of use to you?" Padmé responded sarcastically.

Vader raised his metal arm in the air in a familiar gesture. Padmé could feel the invisible hand clenching around her throat again, and knew that she would die this time. Vader had said that the next time he Force choked her he would not let go, and she could see the rage in his eyes and knew he would fulfill that promise.

As her air supply was cut off, Padmé felt proud that during her entire time as Vader's slave she had never betrayed the rebels, even when her emotions warred within her. She reflexively brought her hands up to her neck, and thought back to the kiss she had recently shared with the man before her. However, she realized that the man choking her was not the same one who kissed her.

As Padmé began to blackout from oxygen deprivation, her last thoughts dwelled on that kiss. She had not been in the arms of Darth Vader, Dark Lord of the Sith. She did not yearn for her enemy, but for the warm caress of "Anakin."

Vader released his chokehold at the sound of Padmé's last spoken word. She had said his real name, and his heart would not let him destroy her. She might be his enemy, but when she used his real name he could not bear to harm her.

Padmé fell to the ground hard after Vader released her. A tear fell down his cheek as he knelt down on the ground beside her. He feared that he had held on too long, and that he may have actually killed her.

Tears continued to well in his eyes as he gently placed his right hand on her forehead and used his left hand to search for a pulse. He was relieved when he felt a pulse, but he remained concerned that it was very weak. Luckily, she was still breathing as evident by the slight rise and fall of her chest.

He gingerly lifted her into his arms, carried her out of the kitchen and into his bedroom. Once there he laid her out on the bed. Tears fell from his eyes as he gazed at Padmé's unconscious form. "I'm sorry." He said as ran a hand across her forehead and through her hair.

He kept checking her pulse periodically, and grew more and more concerned as it got weaker. There was nothing he could do, but hope and pray that he had not killed her. He could not believe that he had actually lashed out at the beautiful woman before him. His twisted logic from earlier had been forgotten. For the time being he was not Darth Vader, he was Anakin Skywalker and tending to the woman he loved.

He grabbed her right hand and held it between his own as he maintained a vigil on her. Every few minutes he checked her pulse again. He was always relieved that she still had one, but he was concerned that it remained weak.

Anakin let out an anguished sigh as he gazed up at her face. He tried to manipulate the Force to heal her, but nothing helped. If she was going to live, she would have to fight for life on her own.

Still clutching her right hand with both of his, Anakin brought it up to his lips and gently kissed her fingertips all the while murmuring, "Please, I'm sorry. I did not mean to. Forgive me."

Fifteen minutes went by and Padmé's condition did not get any better. Anakin's pleas became more insistent with each passing moment as he remained by her side. He leaned in to check her pulse again, expecting the worse, but was surprised and pleased to feel that it was finally getting stronger.

He smiled at this and brushed a gentle kiss across her forehead whispering, "Rest, my angel." All was silent and peaceful as Anakin continued to gaze at Padmé. However this silence was interrupted by the sound of his comlink.

"What is it?" Anakin spoke into the comm. with irritation. He was annoyed that somebody was bothering him at this critical time.

"My lord, we believe we have found a lead on the rebel location." Vader's admiral said.

Anakin did not say anything, but turned his attention back to Padmé.

With Vader's silence, the admiral continued, "We have intercepted a holo transmission. It appears that a large number of rebels including the rebel leaders are massing near Sullust. What are your orders, my lord?"

Anakin remained silent, his attention fixed on Padmé.

"My lord?" The admiral questioned. However, he received no reply. "My lord?" The admiral repeated a little louder.

This broke Anakin out of his reverie and he replied, "Set our course, and do not bother me again unless it is important." Anakin ended the transmission as he finished speaking, but growled in frustration as the comm. rang again.

"What?" Anakin barked into the device.

The admiral stuttered as he explained, "Mm... mm... my lord, the Emperor wishes to speak with you."

"Fine, I will be in the communications room in a few minutes." Anakin replied, trying to hide the annoyance and frustration in his voice. He ended the transmission a second time and looked back at Padmé. His transmission should not take long, but he did not want to leave her alone in her current state.

Time was of the essence, he could not keep his master waiting too long, but he could not think of one person to entrust with Padmé. However, he could hear C3P0 bickering with R2D2 outside the door and an idea formed in his mind.

Anakin lightly caressed Padmé's cheek before he quickly left her side and opened the bedroom door. C3P0 jumped in surprise as the door opened as R2 beeped indignantly at his last comment.

"3P0, R2, get in here immediately." Anakin said tensely as he returned to Padmé's side.

C3P0 and R2 entered the room. "Is there something you need Mas..." C3P0 spoke but was interrupted by Anakin.

"Yes, I need to leave for a little bit. I need you both to look after Padmé. She is not feeling well, and I do not want her left alone. If her condition worsens contact me on this." Anakin

threw a comlink to 3P0 who dropped it, but R2 quickly retrieved it.

“Don’t worry master, we know what to do.” C3P0 replied cheerily.

Anakin smiled and then turned back to Padmé. He leaned in and kissed her forehead again and softly whispered, “I’ll return shortly.” Before he turned and left the bedroom to meet with his master.

Ch 24: The Truth

Chapter 24: The Truth

“You wished to speak with me master?” Anakin asked as he knelt before the image of Sidious.

Sidious smiled. “Yes, a few hours ago I could feel your rage through the Force. Is your slave giving you trouble?”

Anakin winced at the question as he replied, “We had a disagreement.”

Sidious cackled. “And?”

Anakin tried to think of something to tell his master without revealing all of the details of past events, “It has been dealt with. She won’t be arguing with me in the near future. Anakin tried to hide his grimace as his thoughts floated back to Padmé’s unconscious form.

Sidious continued to cackle. “Good, good.” Sidious’s laughter stopped and he took a more serious tone, “Now my apprentice, I have heard that you have found the rebels.”

“Yes my master, we intercepted a transmission and it appears that a large number of them are massing near Sullust. It also appears that many of the rebel leaders may be there.”

Sidious smiled, “Very good my apprentice, I see that you have been busy since we last spoke.”

Vader shivered slightly but remained silent as his master continued to speak.

“You will destroy the rebels once and for all. Show those traitors no mercy. Their pointless war will be over and there will be no more talk of the Republic. The galaxy shall be mine. I will be the ultimate power!”

Anakin’s brow furrowed as he took in what his master said. “But master, I thought we were bringing peace to the galaxy, and securing our citizens’ well being.” Vader said as he gazed up at his master.

Sidious smiled and replied, “Yes, my apprentice. Peace will reign in the Empire once again, once all citizens follow my rule.”

“But...”

Sidious’s eyes narrowed as his apprentice questioned him and he interrupted him. “Do I sense some hesitation from you, Lord Vader?”

“No, my master, it’s just...”

“Just what?”

“Is power the only thing you want?”

Sidious cackled maniacally. “Of course it is my young apprentice, what more could a Sith want? Only through power can we achieve greatness. Imagine what you could have done with your powers if you had known them when your mother died. Sith power can only be gained through the control of others. By killing the rebels you will gain yourself enough power to fulfill your promise to your mother.”

Anakin thought about this for a moment and then spoke, “Perhaps, but...”

Sidious’s eyes narrowed again and his tone dropped in irritation, “Do you doubt me?”

“No, it’s just...”

Sidious interrupted Anakin again, “You dare, to doubt me. I showed you what happens when you fail. Do I need to teach you another lesson, my apprentice?” Sidious wondered where his apprentice had formed all these new ideas.

Anakin shivered and bowed his head in deference to his master, “No, my master.”

Sidious was pleased by this response. He had been concerned by his apprentice’s line of questions, but he appeared to be completely submissive to Sidious’s orders. Sidious smiled at the thought that it was easy to manipulate his apprentice. Sidious brushed off Vader’s line of questions as youthful curiosity. Besides, he had felt the rage emanate off of his apprentice previously. It was obvious that he was a Sith Lord in every sense.

“Good. Remember that I saved you from a life in bondage, my young apprentice. You are here to serve me! Now go, destroy the rebels and bring me control of the galaxy.” Sidious stated firmly before ending the transmission.

Anakin continued to kneel as his mind tried to process his master’s last words. His eyes grew in shock as he replayed the words, “You are here to serve me!” This made it sound that Anakin had been taken from one form of enslavement and placed into another, but that was not possible, Sidious was a good man. He was a visionary who reformed a failing government system.

However, then Anakin recalled another statement from his master, “I will be the ultimate power!” Unlike the time when Anakin was being punished for failing his master, he knew that this statement was not said in anger. Most importantly, he had now made this statement twice, which could hardly make it a coincidence.

Realization dawned on Anakin. The man he revered as his savior was evil, corrupt, and power hungry. Anakin had followed the ways of the Sith in hopes that its power would allow him to help the galaxy, but now he could see that it had harmed it.

Anakin sat back on the floor and placed his head in his hands and openly wept. His emotions had been used and manipulated to support another man’s greed. He felt betrayed that he had been released from one form of slavery only to be ensnared in another. Worst of all he grieved for the atrocities he had committed in the name of securing the Empire. Padmé had been right; he had just been a pawn to Sidious’s ultimate plans.

Anakin’s comlink rang and his Admiral spoke over it, “Lord Vader, we will be arriving in Sullust in a day. Anakin did not respond, and the admiral did not press him further. Instead, Anakin continued to grieve over how blind he had been to his master’s true intentions. He had fought Padmé since the day he met her, but in reality she had always known the truth.

As his thoughts dwelled on Padmé, Anakin thought of the rebels he would be forced to kill tomorrow. It was bad enough living with his past atrocities, but this looming one seemed to hurt worse. He could never redeem himself, or could he?

Anakin realized that he would not be forced to destroy the rebels tomorrow. He was free to choose to go against his master. Perhaps he could help the rebels and stop Sidious from destroying the galaxy he naively thought he had been protecting. Tears fell from Anakin's face as his thoughts lingered on the fact that Sidious had manipulated him.

However, he realized that tears would not help the situation, now was a time for action. He was being given a chance to redeem himself. Anakin stood up and wiped the tears from his eyes. He was no longer anybody's slave and he was going to stop Sidious, his former master. Anakin quickly walked to his quarters. He hoped that Padmé was conscious and well because he had a lot to discuss.

Ch 25: Unreciprocated Love

Chapter 25: Unreciprocated Love

Anakin entered his bedroom to find C3P0 and R2 were still keeping watch over an unconscious Padmé.

“How is she?” Anakin asked as he approached the bed and sat down next to Padmé.

“Boop boop boop.” R2 replied.

“Her condition is stable, master.” C3P0 responded.

“Call me Anakin.”

“Yes, Master Anakin. She has not moved since you left, but her condition has not deteriorated.”

“Thank you 3P0, but you do not have to call me master, just Anakin will do.”

“I’m sorry sir, but that just wouldn’t be proper. You are my maker and the title is to show my respect.”

Anakin sighed in exasperation, there was no point in arguing with his droid. “Thanks for your help, both of you. You may leave if you want, I’ll stay and watch over her.”

“Very well Master Anakin, call us if you need us. Come along R2.” C3P0 replied and then turned and left the bedroom. However, R2 did not immediately follow.

“Boop beep boooooop?” He asked Anakin.

Anakin turned towards Padmé and brushed a tendril of hair away from her face. “I think she’ll be ok. I hope.”

R2 seemed to be pleased with this response, and left the bedroom. Anakin did not even seem to notice he had left for his attention was completely focused on Padmé. He absent-mindedly ran his fingers through her hair and gazed at her in silence for a few minutes. Then he began to softly murmur to her.

“You were right, my angel. I should have listened to you. I was blinded to his true intentions. Blinded by the horrors of my past, but I am no longer shrouded in darkness. I will find a way to stop him, I promise to right the wrongs I’ve caused.” Anakin paused for a moment before continuing.

“You were right, you were always right. I’m sorry. I love you.” With this last statement Anakin leaned in to brush his lips against Padmé’s in a soft kiss. However, before he could consummate his kiss, two hands rose to his chest and pushed him away from Padmé.

Anakin was puzzled by this, and looked down to see that Padmé was pushing him away. His blue eyes lit up and he smiled, “You are ok. I was so worried.” He spoke as he looked up

into Padmé's brown eyes. He leaned back in to complete his kiss, but Padmé pushed him away again more forcibly and shouted at him.

"Keep away from me! Do not touch me!"

Anakin was shocked by this outburst, but he knew he should have expected it. After all, he had Force choked her and she had no reason to trust him. He tried to reach a hand out to comfort her, but she quickly scrambled away from his touch. However, the movement was too fast too soon after all she had been through and as she stepped off the bed, she immediately collapsed to the floor.

Concerned, Anakin quickly moved to the opposite side of the bed. Padmé appeared to be fine; it looked like she had just fallen. He tried to pick her up, but Padmé batted away his hands and yelled at him again.

"Do not touch me! I do not need your help, you monster!"

Anakin was hurt by her last declaration, but he knew she was right. "You are right, I was a monster. I was blind to the truth that my master was evil. I should have listened to you."

Padmé was surprised by this declaration, and even more so by the remorse she heard in his voice. Something must have happened when she passed out that had changed Vader's opinion on his master. However, Padmé did not care. His change of heart did not change the fact that he was a Sith. After dealing with his mood swings, watching the attacks on her rebel comrades, and being Force choked twice, she did not trust him. This change of heart was probably temporary.

"I'm glad you are finally seeing your master as the evil scum that he is!" She spat out angrily.

"I was lied to, and I was blind to see it." Anakin replied sullenly.

Padmé rolled her eyes and then looked back at Anakin and sarcastically replied, "That's an understatement." Padmé gingerly pulled herself off the floor and tried to sit back on the bed, but she collapsed back to the floor on this first attempt. Anakin held out a hand in an attempt to steady her and help her, but she saw it and yelled at him, "Don't you dare touch me!"

Anakin dropped his hand and his eyes from her sadly. "I'm sorry," he murmured as Padmé made a second attempt to get back on the bed. She succeeded this time and coldly stared back at him.

"You are not sorry. You have wanted to do that for a long time, so do not waste the false pity on me." She angrily replied.

Anakin shook his head, "No, I would never want to harm you. That was the darkness blinding me to my true feelings. My former master has revealed his true intentions, and I now see the truth. My darkness has been lifted, and I could never harm you, I love you."

Padmé's mouth fell at this last statement in mortified shock. She stayed silent for a moment until she had composed herself and then sarcastically replied, "You love me! Ha! Well, you have a funny way of showing it, Lord Vader."

Anakin sadly stared back at her; he deserved her anger after all that he had done to her. He did not think that she would ever love him, after all he had done, but at least she knew what

he felt. “The name is Anakin Skywalker. I quit being Darth Vader a few minutes ago when my master revealed his true nature.”

Padmé rolled her eyes at this comment. He said this now, but she suspected that in any moment he would go into Sith Lord mode and be choking her again.

Anakin took on a slightly more serious, but gentle tone as he continued to speak. “I have something to tell you. We are going to Sullust.”

Padmé’s eyes grew wide in horror as she shouted, “I knew it! Nothing has changed you are still killing rebels!”

Anakin raised a hand in a gesture indicating that she should calm down as he shook his head, “No, you have it wrong. That might have been my initial plan, but things have changed. I will have my crew stop The Executor along the outskirts of the system and I will take a shuttle down to meet with the rebels.”

“Oh, so you are going to kill them in person this time.” Padmé stated haughtily.

Anakin sighed in frustration and then continued, “No, I will provide them with the information they need to destroy the Emperor. I will give them the ability to rebuild the Republic, that I regretfully destroyed.” Anakin frowned as he turned his face away from Padmé’s.

He choked back the sadness in his voice as he spoke, “After my meeting you are free to join them. I will be taking the Executor far away where it cannot hurt the rebel’s plans. Then I will find a quiet place to live in solitude for the rest of my days.”

Padmé glared at the back of Anakin’s head. She did not believe a single word he had just said. She knew that tomorrow would be the last day of the rebel alliance and she was angry that the man before her would take a key role in its demise.

Anakin could feel Padmé’s doubt and anger, but he did not blame her for her feelings. They were all a result of his actions, of the darkness that had consumed his life. The woman he loved may never forgive him, but he would not fail her. He would restore freedom to the galaxy and to her. Although it hurt that she may never speak to him again, he thought that perhaps that was the punishment he would have to serve for the stupidity he had shown for years.

Anakin got up and walked to the bedroom door, but before he left he called back to her, “Get some rest, I’ll be back in a while. I have some things to take care of. Call R2 or 3P0 if you need anything.”

Ch 26: The Emperor's Curse

Chapter 26: The Emperor's Curse

Padmé glared at the closed bedroom door. Vader must be crazy if he thought that she believed him. He had made it clear when he Force choked her that he was determined to find the rebels. Now that he had found them and his victory was complete, he was putting on the pity act for her. He was acting nice in an attempt to play with her emotions, but she would not let him.

Tomorrow, he would be Darth Vader and ruthlessly destroy her friends, comrades, and hopes for freedom. He was only using the facade of Anakin Skywalker to lure her into a false sense of hope. Vader must have sensed her feelings towards Anakin, and was trying to use it to his advantage.

She knew that Vader wanted to enhance her misery and pain, so that he could bask in it during his victory. However, she would not let him do that to her. She would grieve for the rebels, it was in her nature, but she would not let Vader manipulate her into having false hopes. He might claim that he knew his master was evil, and that he had seen the error of his ways, but Padmé did not believe that the Sith Lord would repent that easily. He must be lying.

Padmé gingerly stood up from the bed she was sitting on. It was Vader's bed, and she would not spend her time in the bed of a monster. She felt that it was an insult to the rebellion that if on the eve of their destruction she took kindness from their murderer.

She felt shaky and unsteady with the aftereffects of Vader's chokehold, and remained still for a few minutes trying to find her balance. Then she carefully walked out of the bedroom and into the sitting room. Once in the sitting room, she walked to the far end of the room and sat on the floor. She would spend the evening on the floor, and not partake in any of the comforts in Vader's quarters.

Still weak from the chokehold and drained from her brief walk, Padmé yawned as she stretched her arms out. She did not want to fall asleep, so she could use that as another sign of defiance against Vader. She tried her best to keep herself awake, but on top of the Force choke, her nightmares from the previous night had left her with very little sleep. To force herself to stay awake, Padmé gingerly stood up, and slowly started to pace the sitting room.

Vader's crew had been slightly puzzled by their leader's orders. When they arrived at Sullust, they were not supposed to destroy the rebel base. Instead, Vader would take his private shuttle down to the base. This seemed to be an odd move, but since intelligence indicated that the majority of the rebels and their leaders were at Sullust, they surmised that Vader had something special planned for the traitors.

Anakin spent the day briefing the entire crew on tomorrow's events. He wanted to make sure that everyone knew the plan, or at least the part he was willing to divulge, so that there

would be no errors the following day. His crew would not question Lord Vader's motives. However, if they knew that Anakin Skywalker had taken over the helm, these loyal Imperialists would have had second thoughts.

Anakin had just finished meeting with the last of his crew and was heading down a corridor to double check his shuttle to make sure it was ready for tomorrow's events. However, his trip was interrupted when his comlink rang.

"Yes?" Anakin answered.

"Beep Beep Boop Boooooop."

Anakin's eyes widened in shock, "What! Is she ok!" He asked anxiously.

"Boop boop beep."

"What in the blazes is she doing there? She should be resting." Anakin said in exasperation. "Hang on, I'll be there in a moment."

Anakin ended the transmission and turned away from his shuttle and went back to his quarters. According to R2 she had fainted in his sitting room, and at this moment her well-being was more important than his ship. Besides, he had already checked the ship once, checking it again was only a precaution.

Anakin briskly walked down the hallway back to his quarters. He would have run, but that would have alerted his crew that there was a problem, and he was trying to be subtle. He did not want to draw too much attention to himself, and his sudden change in heart and behavior.

A minute after R2's transmission, Anakin arrived at his quarters. He could see R2's domed top over one of the far sofas in the sitting room, and he walked towards him. As he rounded the last sofa, he could see Padmé's body lying sprawled across the floor.

Anakin quickly knelt beside her and placed his hand on her forehead, using the Force to sense what was wrong with her. She seemed to be fine, since her vitals were strong. It appeared that she had collapsed from exhaustion, which did not seem surprising after all she had been through.

Anakin turned to R2; "She should be fine after some rest. She's exhausted. How did she end up out here?"

"Beep beep."

Anakin picked up Padmé and gathered her in his arms, "Yes I know she walked." Anakin said as he rolled his eyes. "But why did she? In her condition, she should have been resting, in bed."

"Boop boop beep beeeep boooooop boop beeeep beeeeeeeep."

As Anakin stood up with Padmé in his arms, he softly repeated R2's last words before trailing off, "She said she did not want to be in the bed of a mo..." Anakin sadly gazed at Padmé. His actions had driven her to her current state. She had no reason to trust him, and she was suffering for it.

Anakin walked towards the bedroom door. Before he entered, he glanced at Padmé again and then turned to address R2 one more time. “She has every right not to trust me. She is right I was a monster. However, I have changed and I can now see my errors. She may never trust me, but I will not let her kill herself because of it.”

With this statement, Anakin left R2 in the sitting room and carried Padmé into the bedroom and placed her back on the bed. He pulled a blanket over the top of her and running his fingers through her hair he said, “This is your bed, not mine. Rest well, I will not betray you.”

Anakin wanted to kiss her, but he knew that she would not approve. So he ran his fingers through her hair once again and left her side to make himself some dinner and then meditate to prepare for the next day before going to sleep himself.

That evening, Anakin slept on the couch, so that he did not disturb Padmé. For several hours, his sleep was peaceful. However, he soon faced a nightmare from his past.

“No mom.” He softly murmured, as he dreamed of the night his mother was killed. ‘Mom,’ He could see the Tusken Raiders dragging his mother away from him. “No mom,” He continued to murmur as he witnessed a group of Tusks beat his mother. Then Anakin watched himself destroy all the Tusks and move towards his mother’s body. He reached a hand out to turn his mother’s battered body over to face him. “Nooooo, Padmé!” Anakin shouted, as the body in his dream was not that of his mother, but that of Padmé’s.

Anakin tossed and turned in his sleep and continued to shout, “No, stop! Noooooo! Padmé!” The Tusken Raiders in his nightmare came back to life and approached him, however they all had the face of Sidious, and they were all cackling maniacally at him.

“You have failed!” The faces said as they continued to cackle. Then all the Tusken’s raised their hands in the air and threw Force lightning at Padmé’s collapsed form.

“Paaaaadddmmmmmméééééééé!” Anakin shouted one last time before he woke up from his nightmare. He was breathing heavily, and quickly turned towards the bed to make sure that Padmé was actually safe. He was relieved when a pair of shocked brown eyes met his own.

In the Imperial Palace on Coruscant, Darth Sidious sat in stunned silence. He had sensed that his apprentice was having his reoccurring nightmare about the day his mother had died. Sidious always enjoyed reliving his apprentice’s fear, hatred, and sorrow from that event, and using the Force often eavesdropped on these nightmares as they occurred over the years.

However, unlike Vader’s past nightmares, this dream had been warped. Vader had been openly grieving for Amidala from pain Sidious was causing her. Worst of all, Sidious had sensed great relief from his apprentice once the nightmare was over. There also seemed to be a lack of Vader’s usual darkness surrounding his Force presence.

This explained Vader’s peculiar line of questions from their earlier conversation, and Sidious was angry with himself for not sensing the change earlier. He had underestimated his

apprentice. More importantly, he had underestimated the influence that Amidala would have on his apprentice.

His eyes narrowed and fury built up within him. She had turned his apprentice from darkness. Sidious called upon the Force to show him the future and could see that the attack on Sullust would not play out as he had originally foreseen. Sidious grew angrier as the Force showed him images of his apprentice betraying him.

Sidious could not let this happen. He would have to act quickly to stop these events. Sidious called upon the Force again, willing it to show him what to do. An evil smile crept upon his face as a plan formulated in his twisted mind. He would show his apprentice the price of betrayal, and the true nature of the dark side. Then he would deal with the meddlesome rebels he dared to join forces with. Sidious's smile grew wider and he cackled maniacally, "No one escapes the dark side. This is your final lesson, my young apprentice!" Sidious yelled to himself.

Then Sidious pressed a button to call his royal guards to him. Two Imperial guards dressed in red robes entered Sidious's chambers and bowed before their Emperor. "How may we serve you, my lord?" The two guards asked simultaneously.

"Ready a shuttle. I have a mission for you." Sidious replied with an evil cackle.

Ch 27: The Comlink

Chapter 27: The Comlink

Anakin's breathing slowed as his eyes met Padmé's and he was assured that she was safe. He noticed that she was trying to get off the bed and retreat from the room.

"Don't go. You need to rest." Anakin called out to her.

"I am not resting here." She replied tensely as she continued to get up.

Anakin stood up from the couch he had been sleeping on and moved towards her. As he approached her he spoke, "You will do the rebellion no good if you kill yourself. You are weak and need to rest. I know you do not trust me, but I promise you that I will not harm them."

Padmé rolled her eyes at this and stood up from the bed, ignoring Anakin's comments. Unfortunately, he had been right, she was weak. Her head began to spin and she started to fall over in a state of dizziness. However, Anakin caught her before she hit the ground and placed her gently on the bed again.

As her head quit spinning and her equilibrium was restored, Padmé realized that Anakin was holding her again, "Get your hands off me!" She shouted.

Anakin took his hands off of her, but also asked her a question, "Will you stay still and rest?"

Padmé rolled her eyes at him, but then brought her right hand up to her forehead, which now ached. She sighed in frustration as she replied, "Thanks to you, it seems I have no choice."

"I'm sorry." Anakin replied meekly as he turned his head away from her. He was now sitting at the foot of the bed. He placed his head in his hands trying to reconcile the dream he had just had.

He was relieved that Padmé was safe in his bedroom beside him, but he was worried about what he had witnessed. He wondered if it was only a nightmare, or if the Force had warped his usual nightmare about his mother as a warning of the future. Anakin let out a worried sigh as he remained sitting on the bed.

Padmé had been holding her own head and had not noticed that Anakin was still sitting on the bed. She briefly glanced up and noticed that he seemed to be mulling something over. She wanted to avoid speaking to him, but her curiosity got the better of her, as she asked, "Did you have a nightmare?"

"Yes."

"Bad?"

"Yes."

Padmé glared at him. His answers were not revealing any information and her curiosity was not satisfied. She had been awakened by his last shouts, and had her own suspicions about his nightmare. She decided to goad the Sith Lord about it.

“It sounded like you had failed at killing me, or something.”

Anakin quickly turned his head towards her. Padmé was shocked to see a tear trickling down his left eye as he replied with a simple, but sad, “No.”

Silence permeated the room until Anakin continued to speak. “When I was very young, my mother was killed by a band of Tusken Raiders. They dragged her from our hovel and beat her mercilessly. I followed them, and slaughtered them in an attempt to save her. However, I was too late. By the time I got to her, she was already dead. I occasionally have nightmares of that day. I had that same nightmare tonight, but...” Anakin trailed off and turned away from Padmé. He placed his head back in his hands and gave out a pained sigh.

Padmé stared back at Anakin; she had been surprised that the Sith Lord had revealed so much information. He was being very open with her, which based on past experience was a rare event. So she decided to press him further, “But what?”

There was a pause of silence before Anakin answered, “It was different this time.”

“How so?”

Anakin glanced back at Padmé. She could see another tear trickling down his face. However, he did not answer her. He turned his head away, and placed it back in his hands.

Darth Vader had made his emotions of anger and frustration well known to Padmé during her stay with him. He had never shown sadness, which seemed to be an emotion the Dark Lord was not capable of expressing. Padmé was trying hard not to let her feelings of compassion change her view of the Sith Lord as he openly grieved before her. To distract herself, she pressed him further. “Tell me.”

“Every time I have that dream, I approach my mother’s body and turn her over. I then look down in horror at her lifeless body, but this time....” Anakin paused before continuing. “This time, instead of her it was you I saw at my feet.”

Padmé gasped.

Anakin turned towards her and his eyes locked with hers as he continued to speak, “That is not all. After I saw you, the Raiders turned into Sidious, and shot Force lightning at your body.” Anakin paused and then continued. “He killed you.” Anakin dropped his gaze from Padmé, and turned away from her once more. He placed his head back in his hands and gave another long sigh.

Padmé stared at him for a moment in silence and then soothingly replied, “It was only a dream.” She then reached her right hand out to him, as if she was going to comfort him. However, a moment before her hand touched him, she quickly withdrew it as she realized what she was about to do. Her emotions were battling with her again, and she was fighting back her compassion. She would not comfort Darth Vader, Dark Lord of the Sith.

Padmé was continuing to fight her emotional battle, when Anakin abruptly stood up from the bed. “I have some things to do before my shuttle leaves. Stay here and rest.”

Padmé glared at him, his words had ended her internal war, “Yes, I’m sure you have lots to prepare. Tell me, if you are so sincere, why don’t you let me come with you?”

Anakin turned towards her, “I have my reasons.”

“I thought you said you were setting me free after you spoke with the rebels, why not sooner?”

“I would free you now if I could insure your safety, but there is no guarantee that the rebels will not shoot down my shuttle.” Anakin paused and smirked slightly, but it turned into a frown as he spoke, “Given past circumstances, I do not generally receive warm welcomes from rebels. I will not free you, just to put you in jeopardy again. I will face the rebels alone. If I am killed, I am sure that they know where you are, and that you will be rescued. If I survive, you are free to join them.”

“But...” Padmé angrily tried to reply, but Anakin cut her off.

“You are too weak to travel at the moment anyways.”

Padmé glared at him. Anakin could feel her anger and knew that he had to act quickly, or she would do something to hurt herself again. He quickly stepped to the bedroom door, and called R2 to the bedroom.

“Boop boop?” R2 asked as he entered the bedroom.

“R2, do you still have the comlink I gave you?” Anakin asked.

“Boop.” R2 replied as he pulled out the comlink and held it out to Anakin with one of his metal appendages.

Anakin took the comlink from R2 and replied, “Thank you, that is all I needed.” He then waved his hand in a gesture indicating that R2 should leave.

After R2 had left, Anakin turned toward Padmé and gave her the comlink. “Here, take it. I will leave mine on during my meeting with the rebels, and you can listen in on this one.”

Padmé looked at the comlink in disgust, “Listen to you kill them?”

Anakin shook his head, “I know you do not believe me, so do what you think is right. I must go.”

As Anakin left, he was not sure if Padmé would not do something to hurt herself, but there was not much more he could do for her. When he entered the sitting room, he saw both R2 and C3P0. Before he left his quarters entirely, he turned to them and said, “Stay and watch over her.”

As the door closed behind him, he heard C3P0 call out, “Of course, Master Anakin.”

Ch 28: Landing at Sullust

Chapter 28: Landing at Sullust

Padmé angrily stared at the comlink in her hands. She could not believe that Vader had the gall to give her this comlink. Did he actually think she would sit and listen to the deaths of her friends and comrades? The Sith Lord was truly sick, twisted, and extremely morbid.

Unfortunately, Padmé had to admit that she suffered from her own morbid curiosity. As much as she kept on saying that she did not want to know what Vader was going to do to the rebels, there was a part of her that was curious about his actions.

Disgusted with her thoughts, Padmé threw the comlink across the room. It landed on the floor, near the sofa. Padmé briefly glanced at the discarded comlink before settling back against the pillows of the bed. She did not want to stay on the bed, but her dizzy spells required her to rest. To occupy her time, she contemplated what she would do once Vader returned from his grim mission.

Anakin left the bedroom and did a last minute check of his shuttle. He had stripped the shuttle's holds of all weaponry, so that he would appear as less of a threat to the rebels. The only weapon he planned on carrying was his lightsaber, but he had no plans to use it. It would stay secured to his belt during his entire meeting. Anakin also double-checked that his computer could transmit a cease-fire beacon, so that he could make it to Sullust in one piece without the rebels blowing apart his ship.

That risk was why Padmé was not allowed to accompany him on this mission. Anakin felt that his beacon would work, and he would be safe. However, he could not be one hundred percent sure of this, and he would not risk Padmé's life because of it.

Once Anakin was assured that his ship was ready, he went to the bridge to oversee operations.

"What is our status?" He asked his admiral.

"We are nearing Sullust now. We should be dropping out of hyperspace within the hour."

"Very good. Remember, I want the Executor to stay just outside of the system. I will be taking my shuttle to deal with the rebels myself." Anakin replied.

The admiral smiled at this comment. "It shall be done, my lord."

Anakin dismissed his admiral with a wave of his hand, and turned to stare out of one of the view ports. As stars streamed past the ship, Anakin slowly closed his eyes and fell into a light meditative trance, readying himself for the task ahead of him.

An hour later, the Executor had dropped out of hyperspace, and was just outside of Sullust. Anakin walked to his shuttle, and was flanked by a group of his officers that were seeing him off.

“What shall we do if you do not return my lord?” Asked the admiral.

“I will return. You will wait for orders until then.” Anakin replied coolly.

“Yes, my lord, but what if...”

Anakin cut off the admiral, “I will return. I have foreseen it.”

With this statement, the admiral fell silent and smiled. If the Sith Lord had foreseen success, then it must be true. Anakin maintained a cool composure, but he wished he had been as certain about his last statement as he had sounded. During his meditations, Anakin had tried to foresee the future, but he could not see anything. The future was cloudy, with multiple outcomes of Anakin’s discussion with the rebels. He could not decipher anything definitive about what was to come. He was blind to the future, and would just have to wait and face it when it happened.

Anakin and his entourage made it to the shuttle, and Anakin dismissed the officers with a wave of his hand. “You have your orders.”

In response, all the officers bowed to him and said, “It shall be done my lord.” They then left the shuttle bay for their posts.

As his officers turned and left, Anakin walked into his shuttle, and sealed and secured the exit. He then went to the pilot’s seat and began the process of firing up the engines. As his engines fired up, Anakin turned on his comlink, as he had promised Padmé. Then with everything prepared for his journey, he piloted the shuttle out of the Executor’s hold, and set a course to rendezvous with the rebels.

Soon, Anakin approached a conglomeration of ships. Once the ships were in his sight, Anakin switched his cease-fire beacon on and silently hoped it would be heeded. Shortly after he had switched on the beacon, a voice called out over his ship’s communications system.

“Shuttle, we have received your transmission. Maintain your current heading and speed. A Jedi starfighter will escort you to a designated landing area.”

The comm. fell silent, and Anakin soon spotted a red Jedi starfighter fly in front of him. He then heard an accented voice call over the comm. “Follow me.”

Periodically, the Jedi starfighter would circle around Anakin’s shuttle, insuring that it stayed on its present course. However, this movement soon stopped as they approached a large rebel blockade-runner, Bail Organa’s Tantive IV. The ship Vader had failed to capture was now the location for Anakin’s redemption.

The Jedi starfighter quickly maneuvered behind Anakin’s shuttle, and the accented voice spoke again. “Land in the shuttle bay, and wait for further instructions.”

Anakin did as he was told and landed the ship as instructed. He then waited for some sign of what he should do next. Through the front view ports of his shuttle, Anakin could see a large team of rebel troops surrounding his ship, their blasters drawn. There was a lot of movement as more and more people surrounded his shuttle.

Jedi Master Obi-Wan Kenobi quickly exited his Jedi starfighter after he landed it next to the Imperial shuttle. He then met up with Master Yoda who stood near the shuttle's exit. Senators Bail Organa and Mon Mothma stood behind the diminutive Jedi as curious apprehension permeated throughout the room.

"That appears to be Darth Vader's shuttle." Mon Mothma whispered to Bail.

"It can't be. He is not stupid enough to face all of us alone. Even if he took some of us out, he would never be able to escape."

"Don't underestimate the power of the Force. Vader is the master of the dark side, we need to be on our guard." Obi-Wan cut in.

"Agree with you, I do. Proceed with caution, we must." Master Yoda replied.

"Yes, master. What do you suggest?" Obi-Wan asked.

Yoda closed his eyes and briefly called upon the Force for clairvoyance on this question. After a moment he replied, "Discover what Vader wants, we must." Then he looked up at Obi-Wan as he stated, 'Tell him to exit.' He turned away and stared at the ship as Obi-Wan pulled out his comm. unit. Just before Obi-Wan turned it on, Yoda added one final comment, "May the Force be with us."

Ch 29: Sensing Trust

Ch. 29 Sensing Trust

“Exit your shuttle slowly, and keep your hands where we can see them.” Anakin heard the same accented voice from earlier speak to him.

Anakin slowly stood up from the pilot’s chair and turned towards the shuttle exit. He paused for a moment, squared his shoulders, and took a deep calming breath. He was going out to meet his destiny. He had a job to do, for the galaxy and although she did not reciprocate his feelings, for the woman he loved. He would not let either of them down.

Anakin double-checked that his lightsaber was secured to his belt and took another calming breath before he pushed a button to release the shuttle’s exit ramp. He then made his way out of the shuttle for his meeting with the Rebel Alliance.

Padmé tried to keep herself preoccupied with other thoughts, but she kept catching herself staring at the discarded comlink. Her curiosity and stubbornness were waging a war inside of her. As time past, she grew more anxious to know the outcome of Vader’s meeting. She wanted to know if her friends were safe, or if they had fallen at Vader’s hand.

Another part of her also wanted to know if Vader was truly sincere. Had he actually changed since he last Force choked her? Padmé had to admit that he had been a perfect gentleman since that event, she wondered if Anakin Skywalker had truly vanquished Darth Vader.

Padmé stared dreamily off into the distance, lost in her own thoughts of Anakin Skywalker, the man she loved. However, she soon realized what she was doing, and shook her head to clear this thought. Her eyes fell on the comlink again, and they narrowed at the sight. Darth Vader had been a gentleman and acted like Anakin Skywalker before, only to turn back to his normal, violent self. There was no evidence that he would change his ways. Padmé turned away from the comlink again as she continued to muse.

Padmé sighed, could she honestly say there was no evidence that Vader had turned from darkness? He had openly denounced Sidious, something he had never done in the past. In the past, Vader seemed to idolize and almost worship his master. Padmé glanced back at the comlink as her thoughts tried to persuade her to believe in Anakin.

She tore her eyes away from the comlink again, only to glance back at it a few moments later. After several iterations of this, Padmé gave an irritated sigh and carefully got up from the bed and made her way over to the comlink. As she slowly picked it up, she was disgusted with herself and her own curiosity, but she could not stand it any longer, she had to know what was going on.

Sitting on the couch to stave off her dizziness, Padmé turned on the comlink and started to listen to Vader’s meeting.

“To what do we owe the pleasure of your vile presence, Lord Vader?” Bail Organa spat out once Anakin was outside the ship.

Obi-Wan and Yoda carefully watched the Sith Lord as he seemed to hang his head in shame before he replied, “My name is Anakin Skywalker, I come before you in peace.”

Both Bail Organa and Mon Mothma snorted in laughter at this comment. “We would much prefer to see you in pieces, after all you have put us through.” Mon Mothma replied angrily.

Anakin stared up at her sadly and replied, “I have done many things of which I now regret. I was blinded by a web of lies and deceit, supported by the manipulation of my emotions. Through the darkness of my life, I could and would not see the truth. However, it is clear to me now that both the rebel alliance and myself want the same thing. Peace and security for the Republic. I have been fighting on the wrong side, and now that I can see it, I offer to help you.

Both Yoda and Obi-Wan’s eyes widened at Anakin’s speech. However, before they could say anything, Bail coolly responded, “You say you have changed.” Bail paused for a moment, quirked an eyebrow, and then continued. “If you have truly changed your ways, where is Senator Amidala?”

Anakin looked up at Bail and calmly answered, “She is safe. She is aboard my ship, just outside the system.”

“You have not changed, you are still keeping her as a slave.” Mon Mothma angrily hissed.

Anakin shook his head before replying, “She has never been my slave, and she is not one now. She is released, and is free to join you at anytime. I did not bring her with me because I did not want any harm to befall her. I knew that with my reputation, there might be a chance that my shuttle would be shot down.”

“We are not animals, like you.” Bail angrily replied. His eyes narrowed as he continued, “How are we to believe that after all the atrocities you committed against us, that you have suddenly turned away from the Empire.”

“How can we trust a Sith?” Obi-Wan added.

With this statement, Anakin called his lightsaber hilt into his hand. In response, both Yoda and Obi-Wan called their lightsabers to their hands and ignited them. Blue and green blades were held out, ready to strike at any moment. However, Anakin never ignited his blade. He looked down at it briefly, as the hum of Yoda’s and Obi-Wan’s lightsabers filled his ears. Then he lightly tossed his saber away from him to his right. It made a clanging noise as it hit the durasteel floor of the Tantive IV.

Anakin then knelt to the ground and bowed his head.

In response, both Yoda and Obi-Wan disengaged their lightsabers, but still kept the hilts firmly pressed into their hands.

“Your lightsaber, a Sith weapon. Important it is. Discard it, you should not.” Yoda stated.

Silence fell on the room, as Anakin did not respond to the Jedi Master's comment. Obi-Wan stared down at Anakin, curious of the Sith's actions. Meanwhile, Yoda closed his eyes and used the Force as he fell into a light meditative trance.

"That weapon is your life, you should not have thrown it away." Obi-Wan stated into the silence.

Anakin looked up at him. "That saber was part of my life, but I am no longer a Sith apprentice. I renounce that title, and with it my claim to that saber. Sidious was using me to support his own selfish aims, I was blind to see it from my emotions of fear, pain, and anger."

Yoda's eyes opened at this statement and he looked at the young man kneeling on the floor. He slowly walked over to the man and quietly said, "Young you were, when your mother died."

Anakin nodded but remained silent.

"Much anger and hate, this caused." Yoda continued.

Again, Anakin nodded in response.

"Easily influenced by the dark side, you were." Yoda stated.

Anakin just hung his head in shame at this comment.

There was a long pause for a moment before Master Yoda replied, "What information of the Empire, have you?"

Anakin looked up at the diminutive Jedi, shocked that the aging Jedi Master seemed to trust him.

"Master Yoda, you cannot honestly believe him?" Bail Organa called out. "He is a Sith!"

Obi-Wan closed his eyes and begun his own meditation as Yoda responded. "Mistakes we make in our youth. Learn from them, we must. Work to fix them, we can. Dangerous is the dark side, but not invincible."

Obi-Wan opened his eyes, and smiled down at Anakin as he added, "He is telling the truth, there is no darkness clouding his Force presence." Yoda looked up at Obi-Wan and smiled as he nodded his head in accordance.

Bail Organa, Mon Mothma, and the rest of the rebel troops present in the shuttle-landing bay, looked on warily as Obi-Wan grasped Anakin's right hand and then pulled him up into a standing position. He maintained his hold on Anakin's hand and shook it as he said, "Anakin Skywalker, welcome to the Rebel Alliance."

Apart from the Jedi, the remaining rebels were wary of Anakin's sincerity, but their doubts were relieved when Anakin provided them with the location and movements of the Imperial fleet, and the best way to get to Sidious on Coruscant. Anakin talked for hours, providing the rebels with a wealth of detail about the Empire to help them win their struggle.

When he was done, all the rebels were smiling at Anakin, happy that they could soon restore the democracy they had been trying to restore for so long. "Senator Amidala will be released as soon as I get back to my ship. She can take my shuttle to meet up with you. I will take The Executor far away, so that my crew cannot interfere with your plans." Anakin stated.

"I still cannot believe you are helping us. What made you change your mind about Sidious?" Bail Organa asked.

"Revealed, the truth was." Master Yoda replied before Anakin could answer.

Anakin smiled. "Yes, it was, and not a moment too soon."

With that final statement, Anakin was escorted out of the conference room he had been in for the last few hours, and taken back to his ship by Obi-Wan.

"Master Yoda, how can you trust him?" Organa asked.

"Trust in the Force, I do." Yoda replied.

Back in the shuttle bay, Anakin was walking alongside Obi-Wan toward his shuttle. Anakin's lightsaber was still lying on the floor, and Obi-Wan called it to him. As they continued to walk, Obi-Wan held the hilt out to Anakin and said, "Here, take it."

"No, I am no longer a Sith."

"It is only a Sith weapon if you wield it as one." They arrived at Anakin's shuttle and Obi-Wan pressed the hilt into Anakin's hand as he repeated, "Take it, you might need it."

Anakin reluctantly took the saber from Obi-Wan's hand and replaced it on his belt. He decided to humor Obi-Wan for the time being, even though he would never use the weapon again. He turned to embark his shuttle, but quickly turned around when he heard Obi-Wan call out, "Anakin!"

Anakin just caught something that Obi-Wan threw at him in his hand. He looked at it, and saw that it was a blue lightsaber crystal. Obi-Wan smiled as he replied, "May the Force be with you."

Anakin humbly replied, "May the Force be with you too," before he readied his ship for the return flight to the Executor.

Padmé could not believe her ears. Anakin had been telling the truth, he had turned from darkness. Darth Vader was no more, and Anakin had helped the rebellion. Soon freedom would be restored to the galaxy.

Her heart raced as thoughts of Anakin flooded her mind. The man she loved, was no longer consumed by the Sith, she had overheard Master Yoda over the comm. say so. Padmé was so excited by this turn of events that the second Anakin walked through the door she wanted to leap into his arms and kiss him. All of her doubts and anger at him had been completely forgotten by the conversation she had overheard.

Padmé walked out into the sitting room, and sat on one of the sofas in anticipation of Anakin's arrival. She wanted to be there the moment he returned.

Hours seemed to pass by, and Anakin still had not returned. With every minute, Padmé's excitement seemed to double as she anticipated his arrival. Finally, after what seemed like ages since the end of Anakin's meeting she heard the sound of the lock to his quarters being released. She quickly stepped from the sofa and approached the door to meet the person behind it.

Ch 30: The Emperor's Ultimatum

Chapter 30: The Emperor's Ultimatum

Anakin was pleased that his meeting with the rebels had gone well. He glanced down at his lightsaber, which was attached to his belt once more. He had replaced the red crystal in it with the blue crystal Obi-Wan had given him. He still had no intention of using the saber ever again, but without the red crystal it seemed less like a Sith weapon. He wanted to eliminate as many aspects of that horrible part of his past as he could, and he did not want his saber to act as a constant reminder.

Anakin smiled as he approached the Executor with the knowledge that he had truly helped the galaxy. However, part of him ached for what he would do next. He was releasing Padmé, and based on her anger at him, he doubted that he would ever see her again. He could not blame her for leaving, he had treated her badly, and since she had been given to him by Sidious, she had practically been his prisoner.

She had no reason to stay, and Anakin would not ask her to. A deep melancholy fell over Anakin as he landed his ship into the Executor's hold, he would miss her very much.

Anakin exited his shuttle still thinking of Padmé. Had he not been so caught up in his own thoughts, he may have noticed how eerily silent the shuttle landing bay was.

Anakin did not notice that something was not right until he stumbled over something large in the hallway. He had not been paying attention to where he was going, and looked back to see what he had walked over. To his shock, he saw the body of his admiral sprawled out across the floor. He knelt down and called upon the Force to tell him what was wrong. He was shocked to find out that the man was dead; however, there appeared to be no fatal wounds on him.

Anakin quickly got up and started to head towards the bridge to find out what happened. However, as he walked down the Executor's corridors, he found more bodies of his crew strewn across the ship. All of them were dead. As Anakin took in the silence that filled the corridors, he realized that everyone must have been killed. Fear gripped him as one thought flowed through his mind, Padmé.

He immediately turned away from the bridge and sprinted towards his quarters, all the while dodging the bodies of his fellow crewmembers that littered the hallway. As he rounded the corner that led to his quarters, his face fell and terror gripped him as he saw that his door was ajar.

"Padmé!" He called out as he sprinted into the sitting room. He quickly glanced around, and when he did not see her, he bolted into the bedroom as he continued to call her name, "Padmé!"

However, no one answered his calls and she was nowhere to be seen. Anakin began to panic as he opened up all the closets in the bedroom. He then checked the fresher, and when he could not find her there he ran out of the bedroom and into the kitchen, all the while calling out her name. “Padmé!”

With one last room to check, Anakin ran to the storage room where R2D2 and C3P0 stayed. He gasped as he opened the room. He had not found Padmé, but C3P0’s limbs were torn from his body, and he had been haphazardly placed inside the closet. He did not seem to be operational, however R2 was. R2 was lying on his side next to one of his robotic limbs that had been dislocated from his body. R2 started making a series of incoherent beeping noises when he spotted Anakin.

“Hang on R2, I can’t understand you.” Anakin quickly picked up R2’s discarded leg and quickly worked to put it back into place as he continued to speak, “What happened? Where’s Padmé?”

“Boooooooop Beeeeeeeep!” R2 said as Anakin reattached his leg to his body and started to reconnect the wires to allow him to move.

“Who kidnapped her? Anakin replied with desperation as he finished connecting the last of the wiring to R2’s leg.

“Beep beep boooooop boop.”

“Play the message R2.” Anakin replied anxiously.

At once R2 played the recording that had been left with him. Anakin eyes narrowed in anger as he watched the image of Darth Sidious appeared.

The image smiled at Anakin as it started to speak, “Welcome home my young apprentice.” Sidious then paused, and his smile faded into a sneer as he continued. “Or perhaps I should not call you that anymore. Yes, I know about your betrayal, but that should be evident by the state of your ship. I do hope the dioxin dissipates before you return from your meeting with the rebels, I would hate for you to miss this message.” Sidious cackled before continuing once more.

“You are probably wondering where your slave is.” Sidious emphasized the last two words. ‘Since you are no longer a Sith, you have no use for her. However, I assure you, she is quite safe, for the moment.’ Sidious cackled again. “If you want her to remain as such, you will stop the rebellion before they carry out their plans.”

Anakin glared at Sidious, he could feel anger rising within him.

The image of Sidious smiled evilly before continuing his speech, “Would you like to see her?”

Anakin’s eyes widened in shock as Sidious’s image faded, and he saw Padmé being held by two Imperial guards. She cried out over the recording, “Anakin please, don’t listen to him! Help the rebels and do not worry about me! Stop him!” Anakin held a hand out to her image, but it soon faded into the image of Sidious who was cackling manically. Anakin dropped his hand and glared at the image.

“There is no escape. You know what you must do. Join me, or she dies.” Sidious paused and as he continued he emphasized every word, “My young apprentice.”

With that final statement, the message ended. Anakin stared at the spot where his former master’s image had just been, contemplating what he would do next. He knew he could not stop the rebellion. That would harm the galaxy, and not stop Sidious from killing Padmé. He knew his former master well, and knew that regardless of Anakin’s actions, he would still kill her.

He realized that the only way to save Padmé was to go after Sidious himself, but he would have to move quickly. Anakin stood up abruptly and walked to the main door of his quarters. However, R2 indignantly beeped at him before he could exit.

“Stay here and take care of 3P0. I am going to rescue Padmé.”

“Boop boooooooooop beep boooooop?”

“This ship is not fast enough. I will not be taking it, and my shuttle will not travel that far of a distance. I will contact the rebels and see what they have available. Perhaps, they can help deal with the dead aboard the ship.”

“Boooooop, boooooop.” R2 stated with remorse.

“Help them in any way that you can.” Anakin added before he exited the room and ran down the corridor to the communications room. Time was of the essence, and he hoped the rebels could help him.

Ch 31: Return to Coruscant

Chapter 31: Return to Coruscant

“Anakin?” Obi-Wan spoke over the comm. channel Anakin had opened up. He had sent an urgent message to the nearby rebel alliance, hoping that someone would pick up.

“Obi-Wan! Sidious has Padmé! I need to get to Coruscant immediately before he kills her.” Anakin replied frantically.

Obi-Wan raised a hand up in a calming gesture, “Hold on, what happened.”

“While I was gone, Padmé was kidnapped. I was left a message by Sidious. He says I have to stop the Rebel Alliance, if I want her to live, but I know better. He’ll kill her anyways.”

“So sure are you?” Master Yoda’s voice could be heard in the distance as he approached Obi-Wan.

“Yes, the future is always in motion, it is difficult to foresee her fate.” Obi-Wan added.

Anakin rolled his eyes, “I do not need to foresee anything, I know how Sidious operates. He is angry with me, and he hates Padmé. He will kill her. I must get to her immediately.”

Obi-Wan and Yoda looked at each other for a moment, and seemed to briefly confer with one another before Obi-Wan turned back to address Anakin. “Why can you not take the Executor to Coruscant?”

“It isn’t fast enough. Besides, Sidious killed my entire crew, I would have to pilot the thing by myself.”

Both Obi-Wan and Yoda’s eyes widened in shock in response to this statement. Obi-Wan whispered in awe, “He killed all of them.”

Anakin nodded as he continued to speak. “I need a fast ship to get me to Coruscant, and a group of people to help handle the dead.”

Both Yoda and Obi-Wan looked at each other again, and conferred in hushed tones.

“Send a ship, we will.” Yoda stated after a minute. A sense of relief swept over Anakin at this statement.

“We will also send a crew to deal with the other matters on the Executor.” Obi-Wan added.

“Good, please hurry.” Anakin stated as he ended the transmission. He then ran to the Executor’s shuttle bay waiting for the rebel aid.

It seemed like ages had passed before Anakin spotted a medical frigate and two Jedi starfighters, one red and one yellow, approaching the Executor. The medical frigate stayed a fair distance away from the Executor, while the two starfighters landed inside the Executor’s

hold. Once they landed, Obi-Wan emerged from the red one, while Master Yoda emerged from the yellow one.

Anakin ran to the ships as he spoke rapidly, "I was getting worried that you would not come. Now I must hurry, which ship will I be taking?"

"The yellow one." Master Yoda replied.

Anakin smiled as he replied, "Thank you." Then he sprinted toward the open cockpit of the yellow starfighter. However, as he approached the ship the cockpit closed by itself. He turned back towards Master's Yoda and Obi-Wan, confused by this.

"Before you go, we need to speak with you." Obi-Wan stated.

Anakin's eyes narrowed at this and he gave an exasperated growl as he replied, "I do not have time for this. Sidious will kill Padmé if I do not move quickly."

"Patience." Obi-Wan said sternly. "This will only take a moment."

"Listen, you must." Yoda added.

Anakin gave another frustrated growl. Every moment that passed put Padmé in more danger and he needed to leave now. Unfortunately, he needed a ship. He was capable of flying the Super Star Destroyer by himself. He was an excellent pilot, and the Force was with him, but he would never be able to reach top speeds in this large ship, if he was piloting it himself. He needed a smaller ship, like the starfighter behind him to make it to Coruscant in time.

Anakin glanced at the starfighter, which remained closed, and then back to Yoda and Obi-Wan. It appeared that he would either have to listen to their lecture or kill them if he wanted to get that ship. He had no intentions to perform the latter, but he hoped their talk would not take long.

He gave out a sigh as he replied, "What do you want to tell me?"

"Just be careful." Obi-Wan replied.

Anakin raised an eyebrow as he continued to stare at the Jedi and gave out an exasperated sigh, "Is that all you wanted to tell me?"

"Yes, much danger I sense for you." Master Yoda responded.

"You said it yourself, the Emperor is furious with you. This is a dangerous time for you, he will try to tempt you back to the dark side." Obi-Wan said.

"Don't underestimate the powers of the Emperor, or suffer a dark fate, you will." Yoda added.

"I am fully aware of the Emperor's powers. He lied to me once; I will not let him do that again. I will not become tangled in his web of deceit." Anakin stated, a hint of annoyance in his voice.

"Once you start down a dark path, forever will it dominate your destiny. Cautious, you must be." Master Yoda replied calmly.

"I will not go down that dark path again." Anakin replied tensely.

“That is easier said than done. Do not give into hate.” Spoke Obi-Wan calmly.

“Yes, yes, to Obi-Wan, you listen.” Yoda paused and then continued. “Control your feelings, you must.”

“I will.” Anakin replied, hoping this was the end of the lecture.

Both Obi-Wan and Yoda smiled at him, and the Yoda waved his hand in the direction of the yellow starfighter, and the cockpit opened. “May the Force be with you,” they both replied.

Anakin quickly turned toward the ship and climbed into the cockpit. However, before closing it on himself he replied back to the Jedi, “May the Force be with you too.”

The Jedi bowed at this response, and Anakin sealed the cockpit and fired up the engines. A few moments later, the Jedi watched as the yellow ship distanced itself from the Executor before jumping into hyperspace.

“Do you think he will succeed?” Obi-Wan asked Master Yoda.

“Difficult to see. Wait we must.”

The two Jedi fell silent at this the stared out at the vast expanse of stars. Each was silently praying that the end of the Sith was near. Their quiet contemplation continued as a staff of personnel from the medical frigate landed inside the Executor and started to tend to the dead.

Anakin pushed the Jedi starfighter to its limits, and arrived in Coruscant in record time. As he quickly climbed out of the cockpit, he immersed himself in the Force, searching for the presences of Padmé and Sidious. He could not sense Sidious, but he could feel Padmé’s presence in the Imperial Palace.

He quickly, but silently crept inside the Imperial Palace. He tried to avoid the Emperor’s red guards, but was forced to kill a group of four of them in front of the throne room. With the swift movement of his blue blade, Anakin dispatched the guards and slowly opened the doors to the throne room.

He glanced into the room, and was both surprised and relieved that the Emperor was not on his throne. He still could not sense his former master’s presence, but he suspected the Sith Lord was cloaking himself. Anakin cautiously walked into the throne room, aware that at anytime the Sith could make his presence known.

Anakin quickly looked left and right trying to make sure that the Sith Lord was not hiding. However, he quickly became distracted, and spun around when a female voice called out to him.

“Anakin!”

Ch 32: Disobeying Orders

Chapter 32: Disobeying Orders

Anakin ran to Padmé, who was chained to the same wall that the Emperor had chained Anakin to when he punished him for the failure at Alderaan. Her arms were secured above her head and she had been dressed in a metal bikini similar to the one she had worn when Anakin had first met her.

“Are you alright? Did he hurt you?” Anakin asked as he approached her. He waved a hand at the chains, and used the Force to release them.

“No, I am fine.” Padmé replied as she was released from her chains. “But what are you doing here? You should be helping the rebels!”

Anakin smiled, “Last I checked I was helping a rebel.”

“Yes, but...”

Anakin quirked an eyebrow at her as he interrupted her, “Besides, when have I ever followed your orders? Did you honestly think I would have left you to Sidious?”

Padmé remained silent at this, and looked down at her feet. She did not know what to say. A part of her had wished that Anakin would come to her rescue, but she would also willingly sacrifice herself for the good of the rebellion.

Anakin placed a hand under Padmé’s chin and gently tilted her head up so that her eyes locked with his, “I could not let him hurt you, I love you.” Padmé blushed at the remark and was about to reply, but Anakin cut her off again. He glanced back and forth to either side of the throne room as he asked, “Do you know where Sidious is?”

Padmé shook her head, “No. I have not seen him since he locked me in here a few hours ago. I had been locked in the detention area.”

Anakin’s eyes narrowed, “He brought you up here?”

Padmé nodded, but remained silent. Anakin was silent for a moment as well as he took in this statement. Sidious had moved her. This could not be a coincidence; obviously his former master had a plan. Anakin glanced around the throne room again before locking his eyes on Padmé again and spoke to her, “You need to get out of here. I know my former master is up to something.”

“What do you mean I have to get out of here, I think we...” Padmé stressed the last word, “...need to get out of here.”

Anakin shook his head, “You said it yourself. I must stop him. The galaxy is not safe with him in control. I am the only one who can stop him. I’ll walk with you to the Palace entrance. Once outside, take the Jedi starfighter on the landing platform and meet up with the rebels. I want you as far away from Coruscant as possible. If we meet up with my former master

before we reach the outside, I want you to run as fast as you can in the opposite direction. There are multiple doors out of the palace, find one. I will hold him off.”

“I will not leave you.” Padmé replied sternly.

“Yes, you will. It is not safe, and I will not have you hurt.” Anakin replied authoritatively.

Padmé quirked an eyebrow and smirked at Anakin, “You should know by now, that I do not follow orders from you. I am staying with you.” She stated with conviction.

Anakin rolled his eyes at this comment and sighed in exasperation. He then locked his eyes back on Padmé’s. They seemed to plead with her to see reason as Anakin replied, “Padmé, please....”

However, Anakin was cut off when Padmé wrapped her arms around him and drew him into a passionate kiss. She broke the kiss momentarily and whispered in his ear, “I am staying with you.” Padmé then continued the kiss before Anakin could argue with her.

Anakin wanted to argue with her, but when he felt her lips meld against his all rational thought left him and he gathered her into his arms holding her to him as their kiss deepened. At the moment, the only thing that seemed to matter was the fact that the woman he loved was safe, in his embrace, and returning his love.

The two of them were so caught up in their passion that they did not notice a dark figure enter the throne room. Nor did Anakin feel or notice the brush of the Force against his mind. It was not until the voice of Darth Sidious called out to them, that they ended their kiss.

“How sweet. The Sith apprentice and the rebel leader. Or should I say the former Sith apprentice and the lowly Imperial slave.” Sidious cackled as both Anakin and Padmé turned to look at him.

Both Padmé and Anakin glared at Sidious as he cackled at them. “Consorting with the enemy. I would never have thought you two would do such a thing. It is a good thing I am here to end this little affair.”

“Padmé, run, get out of here now.” Anakin whispered firmly to her as he stepped in front of her, shielding her from Sidious’s view. However, Padmé did not leave. She could not leave Anakin Skywalker, the man she loved, at the mercy of the vile man before them.

“Your reign is over, your highness.” Anakin spat out.

“Oh no.” Sidious paused for a moment before continuing. “I’m afraid you are much mistaken. My reign will continue and you will either join me or die.” Sidious smiled at Anakin.

“I will not join you!” Anakin shouted.

“Why? You used to follow me. Have you let the charms of a lowly slave sway your decisions?” Sidious looked over Anakin’s shoulder and smiled evilly at Padmé.

Anakin’s anger grew at Sidious’s taunt, “She is not a slave. She is a saint, an angel, and a queen compared to you.”

“A queen?” Sidious smirked at Anakin and then continued his goading. He could feel Anakin’s anger rise with each taunt, he would soon fall prey to the temptations of the dark side once more. “And does her royal highness know that she is consorting with a worthless slave boy from Tatooine. A slave, I helped rescue. A slave, that now turns his back on the help I gave him. I saved you from bondage, and now you thank me with betrayal.”

Anakin’s eyes narrowed at this comment as he yelled back a response, “You lied to me! You used me! You never saved me from bondage, you just moved me from one enslavement to another!”

Sidious’s smile dissolved into a sarcastic pout as he replied, “My apprentice, your accusations wound me deeply. Your slave has poisoned your mind and turned you against me.” Sidious pulled out his lightsaber hilt and took a step towards Anakin. “I will need to remedy this situation and reshow you the true nature of the dark side.

Anakin glared at Sidious as he replied, “You will try.” He then attempted to use the Force to call his lightsaber from his belt to his hand. However, nothing happened.

Sidious launched Force lighting from his fingertips directly at Anakin, while the young man was distracted. Sidious cackled, knowing that Anakin had not realized that Sidious had brushed his mind earlier and blocked his use of the Force. His former apprentice was powerless and at the mercy of the dark lord.

“Your feeble skills are no match for the powers of the dark side, my young apprentice.” Sidious coolly responded as Anakin fell backwards after the blast of Force lightning.

Padmé quickly kneeled down towards Anakin’s fallen form and running a hand through his hair she anxiously asked, “Anakin! Are you alright?”

Anakin had the wind knocked out of him from the powerful blast and was breathing heavily. He grimaced as he looked up at Padmé. He had to protect her. Still shaken from the Force lightning, he gingerly stood up to face Sidious. He stood in front of Padmé again guarding her from the Sith Lord.

Anakin kept his eyes locked on Sidious as he stood, but called back to Padmé. “Padmé, get out of here now! He has blocked my Force ability, you must leave now!”

Ch 33: The Battle over the Dark Side

Chapter 33: The Battle over the Dark Side

Padmé did not move. She shook her head and cried out, “No! I will not leave you.”

“Padmé! Do not argue with me. Go!”

“No!”

Sidious cackled at the couple’s bickering, “I see you never did gain control over your slave, my young apprentice. No matter, soon she will no longer be our problem.”

“You will not harm her!” Anakin yelled as he directed his attention back to Sidious.

“You can save her. I will spare her life if you rejoin me.” Sidious replied coolly.

Anakin snorted at this, “I don’t think so.”

“If you will not turn, I will be forced to kill her, my young apprentice.” Sidious said with an evil smile.

“I will not turn, and you will not harm her!” Anakin yelled, and then directed his attention to Padmé one more time. “Get out of here, now!”

Padmé did not leave, but moved backwards from Anakin when she heard the snap hiss of Sidious’s lightsaber blade igniting.

Anakin turned back towards Sidious, and grabbed his lightsaber hilt off of his belt and ignited his sapphire blade. He was angry that Padmé had not left as he had instructed, but at least she was moving away from the ensuing battle.

“I see you have altered your lightsaber, my young apprentice. A pity you went through that exercise because soon you will be changing it back.”

Anakin remained silent and glared at his enemy.

Sidious slowly started to circle Anakin, his red blade held out in an attack position. Anakin focused all of his attention on Sidious and mirrored his footwork. At the moment, his lightsaber was held in a defensive stance. He was at a disadvantage with his Force abilities disabled, but Anakin was a gifted swordsman. His natural talents would be put to the test today.

The two men continued to circle around each other for a few minutes, while Padmé looked on in apprehension from across the room. Then all at once, Sidious ran at Anakin, and started a series of violent attacks.

Sidious’s scarlet blade was swung towards Anakin’s left side, but the young man was quick to deflect it. In response, the Sith Lord quickly spun and launched an attack on Anakin’s right side, but again this attack was blocked by Anakin’s blue blade. The two men

held their blades together and pushed their weight into each other, trying to dominate the other one.

Soon each fighter stepped back, and took up their respective stances to start a fresh round of attacks. This time Anakin, approached Sidious, and swung his blade directly in front of his former master. The Sith Lord easily deflected this attack, and Anakin quickly spun and attempted to lash out at Sidious's right side. Like all previous attacks, this one was parried away as well.

The two opponents seemed to dance around each other as their blades clashed with one another. Neither seemed to be gaining an advantage over the other.

After another volley of Anakin's attacks were broken off and the two fighters were circling each other again, Sidious stated, "You fight well, my young apprentice."

Anakin briefly laughed at the comment, "You should know, you taught me!"

Sidious smiled, "Yes, I did. However, you had your Force abilities at the time."

"Then you are obviously losing your touch, if you cannot best me now." Anakin replied sarcastically.

"You think so?" Sidious cackled. "You still have much to learn, my young apprentice." Sidious then quickly held an open hand out to Anakin and violently Force pushed him into one of the walls.

"Anakin!" Padmé screamed as he hit the wall near the doorway, and the chains that had previously bound her wrapped themselves around him. He had lost his grip on his lightsaber, which fell to the floor with a loud clang after Anakin's body made impact with the wall. He struggled against the chains as they wound themselves tighter against his body, preventing him from retrieving his weapon. Padmé ran to him, but was soon being dragged away from him by some invisible force.

"Anakin!" Padmé screamed again as she held her right hand out as if she was trying to reach him. She struggled to move towards him, but was powerless. Sidious was using the Force to drag her away from Anakin.

Anakin continued to struggle against his bonds. He briefly looked up and saw that Padmé was being pulled away from him. "Let her go!" He yelled angrily.

Sidious cackled, "Now, now my young apprentice. Is that any way to treat my honored guest? Your slave will be the witness to your fall back to the dark side."

"I will not fall!" Anakin said as he thrashed against the chains that held him.

Padmé continued to struggle against the hold Sidious had on her, but found her efforts useless. She stared hopelessly back to Anakin. She knew her time was up, in a few moments Sidious would kill her. She said a silent prayer for Anakin, and with her eyes tried to give him a silent farewell.

Padmé screamed as one of Sidious's gnarled hands gripped her around the wrist and sharply drew her towards him. He then fixed his gaze on his apprentice and spoke to him, "I will give you one last chance, my apprentice. Join me, and I will spare her. Otherwise, she will die. Make your choice!" Sidious finished with an evil smile.

"Don't do it, Anakin!" Padmé shouted as she struggled against Sidious's grip. She tried to claw and kick at him, but Sidious used the Force to block her attacks and keep her fairly immobile.

Anakin glared at Sidious, his anger growing exponentially with each passing moment.

Sidious closed his eyes and fed off his apprentice's feelings, "Good! I can feel your anger, it makes you powerful. Now join me, let the dark side consume you."

"No!" Padmé shouted, "Don't listen to him."

"It is unavoidable, it is your destiny. You are mine!" Sidious stated firmly, his eyes boring into Anakin's.

Anakin had felt the lure of the dark side drawing him in, but when he heard Sidious claim him as his own, he shouted, "No! I am not your slave!"

Sidious's eyes narrowed at this, and he threw Padmé on the floor between himself and Anakin. "So be it." He then launched Force lightning at Padmé who screamed in agony. The metal bikini she wore that acted as a conductor for the dark electricity magnified the pain she experienced.

"NOOOOOO!" Anakin roared in response as he violently twisted his body against his chains.

Sidious stopped his Force lightning momentarily and stared down at Padmé. She tried to pull herself up, but found herself too shaken to do so. A wicked gleam crossed his eyes as he watched the woman struggle. He then averted his gaze back to his apprentice, and smiled. He then fired another quick bolt of Force lightning at Padmé, who writhed and screamed in agony once more.

"Stop! NOOOOO!" Anakin shouted once more, still trying to free himself from his bonds. He tried to will the Force block Sidious had put on him earlier to shatter. He was helpless without his Force abilities.

"I gave you a choice, my young apprentice. You will not join me, so I will not spare her. Only the dark side of the Force is strong enough to stop me." He shot another bolt of Force lightning at Padmé who screamed again before collapsing back on the floor breathing heavily.

Sidious continued his speech, "I can feel your anger my apprentice. Release it, only your hatred can stop me. The powers of the dark side are the only thing that can save her."

Sidious paused and let Anakin mull this over. He noticed Anakin's gaze fall back onto Padmé and he could feel his apprentice's anger and hatred grow. Soon darkness would consume him. One more attack, and he would kill Amidala once and for all, and complete his apprentice's fall to darkness.

As Sidious raised his hand for the final attack, Padmé looked up and locked her eyes on Anakin's. She reached her right hand out to him and hoarsely whispered, "Anakin."

Sidious started another volley of Force lightning attacks on Padmé. However, this time he would not let up until she was dead. Padmé screamed and writhed in pain once more, and Anakin felt the hatred in him reach the boiling point. The dark side was beckoning him, and as he watched Padmé and heard her pain, he found its lure more enticing.

Padmé's life was dwindling quickly, and with it Anakin's resolve to fight the encroaching darkness. Sidious was about to win his battle, Lord Vader, Dark Lord of the Sith was about to return.

Padmé's body felt like it was on fire. The pain was too intense, and she knew she could not sustain this assault for much longer. However, she knew that she had to tell something to Anakin before she died. As the Force lightning raged throughout her body, she forced herself to repress her screams of agony. She looked up into Anakin's eyes that she barely noticed were turning a Sithly yellow and shouted, "Anakin, I love you!"

Those three simple words, words Anakin had never heard from Padmé before, shattered through the darkness that had started to consume him. His eyes regained their blue color as he let go of his anger. Padmé loved him, and his heart swelled at the thought.

Additionally, those three words destroyed the dark Force block Sidious had placed on Anakin. The dark side knew nothing of love, and the strong power it possessed. Darkness was no match for the blinding light that was Padmé and Anakin's love.

Anakin looked into his former master's eyes, whose attention was focused on causing Padmé pain. She had reverted to screaming at the torture her body was enduring. Anakin's eyes narrowed at the gleeful look on Sidious's face, and he called upon the Force to release his chains. Then before Sidious noticed, Anakin Force leapt between Sidious and Padmé, and using his left hand tried to hold Sidious's Force lightning at bay.

Padmé fell silent as her attack ended, and she blacked out as she collapsed on the floor.

Sidious was taken aback by his apprentice's sudden Force recovery. Fear gripped the Sith Lord as he realized he might have underestimated his former apprentice. Sidious tried to continually fire Force lighting at the young man, but Anakin used the Force to push it back at him.

Eventually, a large ball of Force energy was gathered between the outstretched hands of the two combatants. However, it was soon impossible for either to control it, and the ball exploded, pushing both combatants away from each other. Anakin landed near Padmé, and Sidious landed near a large window that shattered with the force of the blast.

Anakin quickly got up and sprinted to Sidious fallen form. He called his lightsaber to him and ignited the blue blade as he moved. Sidious gingerly stood up as he sensed Anakin's approach. His black Sith robes billowed in the wind that emanated from the shattered window.

Anakin swung his blade in a high arc in an attempt to behead Sidious, but the Sith Lord ignited his red blade and parried the attack away. The two were then locked in a fierce lightsaber battle, as Anakin brutally swung his sapphire blade against the Sith's crimson one. He managed to keep Sidious's back to the window, preventing any escape.

Eventually, the better swordsman won out, when Anakin disarmed Sidious by cutting through the top of the hilt of Sidious's lightsaber, rendering the weapon useless. In a last ditch effort to save his own life, the Sith Lord fired Force lightning at Anakin again. Anakin held his ignited lightsaber in his right hand, and using the Force and his left hand to hold the lightning at bay, as Sidious spoke to him.

"How can you betray me? I saved you!" Sidious called out desperately.

"No, Padmé saved me. From you."

"And now she is dead! You have lost again, my apprentice. Like you always do. First your mother, then your hand..."

Anakin interrupted Sidious before he could continue. "This hand." Anakin tilted his head and gestured to the metal hand holding his lightsaber. "Turned me to the dark side. It will now lead me away from it." Then by relinquishing his use on the Force to hold back the lightning, Anakin quickly Force flung the sapphire blade into Sidious's chest.

The remnants of Sidious Force lightning penetrated Anakin's body, depleting the young man's strength. Both the former Sith apprentice, and the Sith Lord stared at each other momentarily. The Sith Lord's eyes showed shock as his life force left him, while Anakin's showed a smug smile.

Then feeling his strength deplete further, Anakin quickly grabbed the hilt of his lightsaber, and pulled it from Sidious's body. The Sith Lord swayed momentarily before falling out of the window to land with a heavy thud on the palace grounds.

Anakin turned from the window, and staggered towards Padmé. To surprise Sidious, he had to put the full weight of the Force behind his lightsaber. As a result, he had been forced to let the Force lightning hit him. Aftershocks continued to reverberate throughout his body, and his breathing grew shallow as he felt himself get weaker and weaker.

He managed to make it to Padmé's side before he collapsed to the floor and he held a hand out to brush the hair away from her face. He looked at her immobile form, and whispered, "I love you, thank you," before he blacked out the light of the world.

Ch 34: The Galaxy is Freed

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Padmé slowly regained consciousness. She did not know where she was; all she was aware of was that every part of her body was in intense pain. She groaned and turned her head to the right to see if she could figure out where she was.

It appeared that she was in some sort of grand room, but she had no memory of this room. She shifted her body and groaned again as her muscles cried out in pain. She gingerly turned towards her left to take in more of this strange room. She gasped when her eyes fell on the unconscious form of Anakin.

Suddenly memories of past events flooded her mind, and she recalled where she was. She quickly looked around the room for any sign of Sidious, but he was nowhere to be seen. Her eyes moved to the remnants of the shattered window, and she saw a lightsaber hilt split into two resting among the broken glass. She smiled, as it appeared that Anakin had won.

Padmé slowly sat up, and called out to him, “Anakin.”

There was no answer, so Padmé moved closer to him and called his name again, “Anakin.”

Again, there was no response, so Padmé gently shook him while she called his name again, “Anakin.”

However, Anakin did not move. Padmé started to become concerned, and she shook him more vigorously and called out his name louder, “Anakin!”

Anakin remained still, and he did not respond to Padmé. She desperately gazed down at him as her mind processed terrible thoughts. Perhaps he had killed Sidious, but.... Padmé shook this thought from her head for it could not be true; she shook Anakin again, screaming his name, “Anakin!”

Tears welled up in Padmé’s eyes when this last attempt failed to awaken Anakin. “Anakin please, you can’t be dead.” She pleaded as she continued to shake him. “Please, I love you.”

Padmé stopped shaking Anakin, as that did not seem to revive him. She tried to fight back her grief as she took in Anakin’s condition. However, she could not suppress her sobs for long, and she broke down, laying her head against his chest as she clung to his body.

Had she not been crying so hard, Padmé may have heard the heartbeat drumming against her ear. Her grief made her inconsolable, but she jumped in surprise when she felt fingers running through her hair.

She quickly looked up to see that Anakin was smiling at her.

“Anakin!” She screamed, a smile alighting her face as she flung herself at him. Every movement hurt, but she did not care at the moment as she eagerly pressed her lips against his.

“Ow!” Anakin exclaimed as Padmé fell on top of him. He started laughing as Padmé started trailing kisses up and down his face. “With the way you are acting, you would think I died and came back to life, or something.”

Padmé stopped kissing him and pulled back slightly, glaring at him. “Don’t you ever scare me like that again!”

Anakin smiled, “Well I don’t think either of us will be being hit by Force lightning again, so I think I can fulfill that request.”

“Padmé smiled, and leaned back into him to give him a kiss, but her weight pressed against his ribs, and he winced in pain and pushed her away.” You know, I did just rescue you from a Sith Lord. I am a little sore.”

Padmé smiled, and leaned into his ear whispering, “I can take away your pain.” She then pressed her lips against his in a deep, passionate kiss.

Padmé accidentally pressed herself against Anakin’s ribs again, and he winced in pain again as he flipped her on her back. Padmé winced slightly as well at being moved, but did not break the kiss. Anakin sighed as their kiss continued, and called upon the Force to relieve both of their aches.

“I love you.” Anakin whispered as he momentarily broke off the kiss.

“I know.” Padmé said as she pulled Anakin back in for another kiss. However, she was interrupted when the doors to the throne room burst open.

Padmé was wrapped into Anakin’s embrace, but they both looked up to see Obi-Wan and Yoda walking into the room.

Smiles came over Obi-Wan’s and Yoda’s faces as their eyes fell on the couple.

“Thank goodness you two are safe!” Obi-Wan exclaimed.

“Done well you have, young Skywalker.” Yoda replied

“Thanks, but you guys missed the show, there were fireworks and everything.” Anakin replied with a chuckle. However, his laughter ended as he exclaimed, “Ow!” when Padmé playfully hit him on the shoulder.

“Do not remind me of that!” She stated

“Sorry milady.” Anakin stated with a roguish smile. “If it is any consolation, the galaxy is now free!” Obi-Wan and Yoda had exited the throne room to leave the couple alone.

“I love you.” Padmé replied.

“I know.” Anakin said with a smile, before pulling Padmé to him for another kiss.

Epilogue

Epilogue

Obi-Wan and Yoda had arrived on Coruscant with a contingent of rebel troops, to secure the planet, the day the Emperor died. Once the planet was secure, the rebel leaders, minus Senator Amidala who was busy recuperating from her ordeal, called an emergency meeting of the Imperial Senate, and formally declared the reformation of the Galactic Republic. The entire senate chamber broke into applause at the news that freedom had been restored.

The following day, new Jedi Knight, Anakin Skywalker nervously stood before a large mass of people with Obi-Wan by his side. With the reformation of the Republic, the Jedi Order was being rebuilt, and Anakin was its first new initiate. He had more than proven himself worthy with the destruction of the Sith Lord.

Anakin nervously fidgeted from foot to foot as they continued to wait. However, his nerves left him when a collective “Ooooooh!” from the crowd drew his attention to a figure dressed in white. An angel was walking towards him.

Padme Naberrie Amidala, walked down an aisle, which her family, friends, colleagues, and two droids flanked. She wore an ornately embroidered wedding dress and veil. Her eyes were locked on Anakin the entire time, a beautiful smile upon her face.

When she finally reached Anakin, she took his hand in hers as they recited vows of undying love to one another. They may have started out as enemies, but by finding love in each other, they had managed to liberate the galaxy. Anakin and Padme continued to stare at each other while the holy man blessed their union. Then with a kiss, Padme Naberrie Amidala Skywalker and Anakin Skywalker bound themselves to one another.

The End

A/N: Thanks for reading everyone!